

Reading Churches Men's Breakfast 17th October 2015

Living dangerously: a life of adventure, faith and purpose

Nathan Beard is a humanitarian technical consultant/trainer for disaster relief, and a bushcraft practitioner. At the Men's Breakfast he outlined, to 60 breakfasters, his journey into personal faith from boyhood, and his testing quest for the answer to these questions: who am I? and, what am I for? Asked as a 7 year old what he wanted to be when he grew up he instinctively replied, "an explorer, inventor and adventurer". At that age his own design and purpose were clear to him. Subsequently school, for all its benefits, dulled that clarity with blunt academic demands. Choosing to put his faith in Jesus aged about 7yrs, Nathan knew he wanted to pursue "life in all its fullness." (John 10 v 10).

His interest in the outdoor life was kindled on the farm in mid Sussex, where his grandparents lived. Here he had licence to roam and found inspiration in shelter construction, fire making, and other survival skills. An early interest in geography led to a degree course at university and his thirst for adventure saw him going first to Bolivia for two months during his gap year, and later to Ecuador as assistant to a Latin Link missionary. It was in this second trip that he met the girl, who was later to become his wife, in the Ecuadorian jungle. The living dangerously tag resonates with his 7 years in Tearfund largely as Technical Officer providing logistics support with vehicles, power supply and remote communications equipment. He has worked in Afghanistan, Liberia, Congo, Kenya, North and South Sudan, Central African Republic and Haiti in 2010, following the major earthquake. These trips involved proximity to war zones, civil unrest, outdoor work in temperatures occasionally above 50 degrees C, and some very unusual journeys over land and water.

Latterly during this work that it dawned on him that he has begun to rely on his own capabilities more than God's, and boldly asked in prayer to be "shaken out of his complacency". This was followed by redundancy from Tearfund and a move into self employed consultancy in humanitarian logistics and security, and a period of training in bushcraft skills. The latter now equipping him to run wild ventures in bushcraft for fathers and sons, church groups and team building for businesses. In this work he has daily to lean into God for His provision.

Nathan's quest for his purpose has been impacted greatly by his experience as a member of Christ Church Fulham, where prophetic prayer revealed and reaffirmed Nathan to be an explorer, inventor and adventurer alongside being man of faith. He outlined the many ways in which he had wrestled with uncertainty about his purpose and calling and presented it as a work in progress. He described his most dangerous choice as getting married and having children, because this has required Nathan to grow into a mature place of loving others. The 24/7 nature of family life has exposed weaknesses in Nathan, which had previously remained well camouflaged, and now with God's help are being restored to freedom.

His desire is to reach out and encourage young men to understand what it means to be a man, and to encourage the bonds/understanding between fathers and sons. Work which needs him to speak out his faith. The reality of hearing from God (as a member of Christ Church) is a key part of living out his faith. The strap line of his business, Nathan Beard Ventures, is *EQUIP, UNITE, EXPLORE, BELIEVE*

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