We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s Channel 4 News’s Jon Snow

The prized possession you value above all others… My Condor bicycle, which I’ve had for six years. They cost around £2,000, but I cycle to work every day so it paid for itself within a year.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend… Letting my music and singing slip. I was a chorister as a child and used to be quite good on the piano and violin.

The temptation you wish you could resist… Fresh bread, croissants, cinnamon swirls, pains aux raisins – they’re so fattening, but so irresistibly delicious.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance… Team Of Rivals: The Political Genius Of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin. It’s an account of how he persuaded men who hated him to work with him.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day… I’d spend a day with Barack Obama to find out what he really believes. I think he’s actually much more charismatic than he’s been as President.

Right: Julie Christie in Doctor Zhivago. Above right: watercolour paints. Far right: the Scottish island of Iona

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity… Painting in watercolours. I paint one almost everywhere I go. The beauty is that you can’t guarantee what will happen, so they constantly surprise you.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise… Hated of those who are perceived as different.

The film you can watch time and time again… Doctor Zhivago, which I saw as a teenager. The beautiful Julie Christie, the great Omar Sharif, the Russian steppes, the snow… wonderful.

The person who has influenced you most… My cousin Peter Snow is a great journalist – I try to emulate him.

The unending quest that drives you on… The search for the truth. I’ll keep asking questions until I find it, but on a scale from one to ten I haven’t even got to one!

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it… I’d steal the minute hand from Big Ben just for the fun of it.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint… William Wilberforce, who abolished slavery in the British Empire. I’d ask him how he did it.

The piece of wisdom that you would pass on to a child… Always look for the funny side. I manage to laugh a lot, even in difficult times – in every cloud there’s a funny lining!

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again… The view of Balcombe Viaduct from my childhood bedroom in Ardingly, West Sussex. Its 37 arches were the horizon of my world and a source of wonderment.

The poem that touches your soul… The Revolution of Science by Robert Louis Stevenson. A world of wonderland, whichI see around me every day.

The philosophy that underpins your life… Treat people well and they will treat you well in return.

The order of service at your funeral… It must be very short because I don’t want to inflict any bother on those who have to get rid of me. I believe that once you’re dead, you’re gone, so none of the funeral stuff really matters.

The best advice you have ever been given… ‘If you’re dead, you’re gone, so none of the funeral stuff really matters.’

The way you want to be remembered… He did his best.

The Plug… Channel 4 News is serious, I hope and informs in its own unique way. It belongs to us all, but costs nothing, and is worth preserving.

Watch it Monday-Friday at 7pm.

As told to Rob McGibbon

The event that altered the course of your life and character… Doing a year’s voluntary work as a teacher in Uganda when I was 18. I’d never been on a plane or left England. The experience transformed me from self-indulgent boy into someone with a conscience.

The song that means most to you… I Believe I Can Fly by R Kelly – it’s aspirational, absurd and speaks of more self-belief than I possess.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions… The day would begin with my wife Precious on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland, where I’d have breakfast at the Argyll Hotel. I have porridge every day with fresh fruit, nuts and honey, followed by coffee. I’d then settle down to paint a watercolour of the rocky outcrops and the rolling sea. Later we’d head to Cape Cod in the USA for a lunch of oysters and lobster. After that I’d swim in one of the spellbinding glacial kettle ponds there. We’d spend the rest of the day on one of the heavily islands off Mozambique, driving and snorkelling. At sundown we’d have a barbecue on the beach. Then we’d find some hammocks and sleep under a full moon to the sound of the waves.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever… Nothing beats the births of my daughters [Leila, 32, and Freya, 29, from his previous relationships], but getting the BAFTA Fellowship last year is as good as it gets in my profession. It’s amazing to get that sort of acclaim from your peers – and still be alive!

The saddest time that shook your world… 9/11. I’ve since covered Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and its scar is constantly visible. I think everybody has been affected by that day.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you… To render the New Horizon Youth Centre charity for homeless young people, which I have chaired for 30 years, redundant.

PS…

Helen Mirren goes back to Hollywood’s golden age in Trumbo – in cinemas Friday. Neil Pearson stars in comedy Hand To God at London’s Vaudeville Theatre, also from Friday, and Elton John’s new album Wonderful Crazy Night is out on the same day.

NEXT WEEK

● Behind the scenes on the BBC’s hard-hitting new adoption drama One Child
● Tuck into our tasty new series on brilliant breakfasts
● Monty Don says hallelujah for hyacinths
● PLUS Britain’s best TV guide

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