

Sophie's interview

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2 **Interviewer:** Sophie, what do you believe about God?

3 **Sophie:** Um – I believe that God is present. I believe in God an' – um – I
4 sort of construct the idea that if you believe in God, you
5 shouldn't question, so when everyone's like – when people we
6 talk – this topic first comes up, people talk about God an' stuff
7 an' like "But how can you prove it?" – an' all this stuff, I'm just
8 like 'Well, I – I think that I' – With my faith if I believe that – I
9 don't believe you have to question. I j– Yeah, so I just basically
10 believe that there is a God an' all that stuff, so yeah.

11 **Interviewer:** Good. You used the word "construct".

12 **Sophie:** Yeah.

13 **Interviewer:** Would you like to say a bit about why you used that word?

14 **Sophie:** Um – I think it's because as you grow up, you – as I grow up, or
15 grew up, um – I pulled bits from my background – my fam–
16 'cause my family being Italian – um – the Catholic sort of f– um
17 – faith and belief: from that – um – an' I just constructed – Also
18 my surroundings, like my school, I just constructed different
19 pieces of what I form in my religion my faith an' that's basically
20 why I said "constructed". Yeah.

21 **Interviewer:** Good. Have you always thought about God in this way?

22 **Sophie:** Yeah. Aw, basically yeah. My s – sort of my beliefs sort of got
23 stronger as I got older, but I've always been – yeah – faithful to
24 God.

25 **Interviewer:** What words would you use to describe your relationship with
26 God?

27 **Sophie:** Um – strong – um – I have a lot of trust, faith, belief, – um – lot
28 of respect. Um – I sort of also bring that into everyday life. Um
29 (*pause*) I think (*pause*) yeah, basically just them.

30 **Interviewer:** In what ways is your faith in God today, different from what it
31 was some years ago?

32 **Sophie:** Okay, some years ago, like in primary school, or at the start of
33 high school?

34 **Interviewer:** In primary school.

35 **Sophie:** Okay. Um – in primary school, since I did not attend a Catholic
36 primary school, sort of God wa– God to me wasn't developed as
37 it has been over the past few years. I went to scripture classes
38 an' s– an' that in the mornings an' – um – but that was mostly
39 just filling out worksheets, so it didn't really – I didn't really have
40 a lot of practice in – in that sort of area. So, yeah – um – I think
41 also being at a Catholic high school has changed because – um
42 – just like you learn a lot from other people an' their beliefs an'
43 stuff like that. So yeah, I jus' think that because I wasn't in that

- 44 atmosphere or that sur– the surroundings that’s why it’s
45 changed a lot.
- 46 **Interviewer:** Is that what you mean by practice?
- 47 **Sophie:** Yeah.
- 48 **Interviewer:** Is Jesus different from God?
- 49 **Sophie:** Yes.
- 50 **Interviewer:** Okay. If he is, what about the differences?
- 51 **Sophie:** I think basically because God is – um – no so much – because
52 Jesus was a physical form of God basically – um – was here on
53 earth. I think that’s about the only difference. He does put into
54 practice – um – everything about God an’ – so, yeah. But yeah,
55 they were a bit different.
- 56 **Interviewer:** Are those differences important to you?
- 57 **Sophie:** Sort of because being the model of – Jesus being the model of
58 God to me – um – it jus’ makes it even more real, makes it more
59 believable. An’ – um – I just think that ’cause lots – lots of times
60 when you think about – um – images of Christ, or images of faith
61 an’ God an’ stuff, you sort of get the image of Jesus’ face an’
62 ’cause you don’t know what God looks like that’s jus’ basically
63 why the difference.
- 64 **Interviewer:** Was there ever a time when you didn’t see any difference
65 between God and Jesus?
- 66 **Sophie:** I don’t think so.
- 67 **Interviewer:** What about the Holy Spirit? How would you explain the Holy
68 Spirit to a friend who doesn’t believe in God?
- 69 **Sophie:** Oh – um – I would jus’ – I sort of don’t really think about that part
70 very much but I would say that – um – the Holy Spirit is sort of –
71 I would describe it as the feeling you get with faith an’ – um – the
72 – sort of the – guidance, the – um – the encouragement. That’s
73 how I would explain it. It would – that’s a tough one – um – yeah.
- 74 **Interviewer:** That’s always been a tough one.
- 75 **Sophie:** Yeah – um – I didn’t really think about that part. Um – I think it’s
76 just sort of (pause) yeah (pause) just sort of the strength an’ –
77 um – the guidance an’ support an’ stuff an’ faith. That’s what I
78 would say.
- 79 **Interviewer:** Okay. You’ve done well.
- 80 **Sophie:** You caught me off guard there.
- 81 **Interviewer:** Now a set of questions about prayer: Do you pray? To whom do
82 you pray? How often do you pray? How do you pray?
- 83 **Sophie:** Okay. Um – the f– first of all, I probably – I try to pray every day
84 – um – mostly at night in bed, like if I’m laying down, or
85 sometimes – um – if it’s in a special day or anniversary, I will

86 kneel down at the window – um – in – obviously in classes
 87 when we pray. In PC we pray – um – I pray not only to God,
 88 also to Jesus, Mary – um – to family members that are passed
 89 away, or family and friends that are passed away. Um – just find
 90 it easy f– to ask for their guidance an’ stuff. Um – also like, not
 91 even – sometimes if I’m just in a bad situation or I’m just having
 92 a bad day – um – I don’t even go away an’ jus’ – I don’t even do
 93 the who– I do when I’m doing the praying at night stuff that – “In
 94 the name of the Father an’ of the Son an’ of the Holy Spirit” an’
 95 sometimes I’ll jus’ start praying in my head an’ – bef– before a
 96 test, anything like that, that’s how I pray. Can’t remember all the
 97 questions that you asked.

98 **Interviewer:** You’ve done well with those.

99 **Sophie:** Okay.

100 **Interviewer:** I will ask you the question: How often do you pray?

101 **Sophie:** Oh, okay. Um – that actually changed a bit. Um – last year I
 102 think I made it a goal to pray every night like sit there and do my
 103 prayers every night, but I think growing up – more so – I jus’
 104 pray – I do pray every day. It’s jus’ like you don’t – I don’t realise
 105 I’m doing it. Like I – like I’ll jus’ be sitting in – like I say sitting in
 106 bed, or whatever – even if – whenever I’m alone – um – an’ I’ll
 107 jus’ say my little prayers an’ stuff like that. So basically I didn’t
 108 make it a routine thing ’cause I think routine – um – sort of took
 109 away from whole jus’ believing, having faith, sort of made it a
 110 chore so that’s why I sorta changed an’ yeah, so I just pray at
 111 home an’ stuff whenever I want.

112 **Interviewer:** How do you pray?

113 **Sophie:** Um – you can say I pray with words. Um (*pause*) you don’t –
 114 like the actual actions in how I pray? Or in other forms?

115 **Interviewer:** You might pray like that, arms outstretched, or you said lying in
 116 bed or sitting in bed. It could be anywhere, but – like, for
 117 instance, you said “do my prayers” and you used another phrase
 118 which suggested almost like repeating prayers that are
 119 memorised. And yet, at another time, you seemed to be saying
 120 that sometimes the prayers you pray are spontaneous.

121 **Sophie:** Yeah. Most of the time I start off with the Our Father and the
 122 Hail Mary and then I will sort of go into the thankyou’s and – um
 123 – then I’ll sort of generally ask for forgiveness and then – um –
 124 even though those parts of routine, they’re always different, so –
 125 um – an’ then pray – I pray for people who are sick, or need
 126 help, guidance, – um – that sort of thing. Also whenever I’m
 127 seem to pray wherever I am, even if I’m – I’m just alone or I – I –
 128 just before a test I always put my hands together and pray like
 129 that. It’s – I’ve always done it. Or if you’re in a group – um –
 130 sometimes I hold other people’s hands I don’t know really why
 131 just that’s just the habit of – that’s just what I picture prayer to
 132 be. So yeah.

- 133 **Interviewer:** To whom do you pray most often? To God? To Jesus? To the
134 Holy Spirit?
- 135 **Sophie:** Ah, probably to God and – um – to what I believe is my guardian
136 angel, my aunty. Um – I pray to her a lot. Um – jus’ also for
137 support, for guidance. Um – yeah, probably to Jesus as well
138 and Mary a lot. So yeah.
- 139 **Interviewer:** How did you come to think of your aunty as your guardian
140 angel?
- 141 **Sophie:** Um – she – um – passed away a– before I was born. An’ – um
142 – because she was – she’s the only like blood-aunty in my – in
143 my family. Um – she’s the only girl an’ – um – I sort of –
144 because I never met her, it’s sort of sad but I – from what I heard
145 I’ve always modelled her as like a very great person. My Mum
146 always said, “You’d really get on with her an’ that’s like your
147 guardian angel.” An’ – um – also the – one of the only photos
148 I’ve got of her is a black-an’-white photo an’ it’s – um – she’s
149 done it for my Dad an’ it’s – um – it’s la– it’s blown up an’ it’s –
150 it’s – it’s really beautiful ’cause she’s just sitting in a field an’ –
151 um – I jus’ – I jus’ love that photo. I’ve got it in my room. An’ –
152 um – I jus’ picture her as this – this beautiful, wonderful person
153 that would always look after me an’ that’s sort of my gift – like
154 having her in spirit with me. So that’s just how I’ve always
155 thought about her. So yeah.
- 156 **Interviewer:** How do you think just generally your belief in God influences or
157 shapes the way you live your life?
- 158 **Sophie:** I think – um – my belief in God influences me because – um – I
159 sort of model my actions sort of from sort of what he would
160 expect if you wanna play – um – like, like when we do the whole
161 thing about conscience I have the – like the worst conscience I
162 feel guilty if I don’t help Mum with the dishes like I have to go
163 and help ’cause I feel that bad, even if I’m doing homework I
164 just sit there thinking, “Mum has to do that all alone” and I feel
165 really bad so I always go – That’s just sort of how I try and do
166 what’s right. Sometimes I try a bit too hard and get all stressed I
167 tend to take on a lot of people’s problems and try to help an’
168 that. Sometimes in doing that doesn’t help myself but I can’t
169 help but not help them. So yeah.
- 170 **Interviewer:** What impact has your faith had on your attitude towards
171 suffering?
- 172 **Sophie:** Um – (pause) Can I have any example like
- 173 **Interviewer:** It could be anything, but these are the really hard questions.
- 174 **Sophie:** Um – I guess so because a lot of people – um – for instance,
175 when my grandfather passed away, i– some people in that
176 situation – um – would blame God, hate God for that. Um – and
177 because of that maybe their fai– their faith is – is shown as a–
178 weak, sort of weak. But I didn’t. I – um – with that situation I jus’

179 – I kept praying he would pass peacefully and I didn't blame
 180 God. It wasn't his fault. An' I jus' sort of – so my shu– my faith –
 181 um – was still strong, but things like –um – the tsunami disaster,
 182 September 11, all that sort of stuff, again I don't blame God, I
 183 jus' hope that he can get those people through. An' – um – I
 184 don't – I'm not (pause) yeah, I – that's where I think I'm a bit
 185 different to some people, jus' turn around an' jus' like "Why did
 186 God do that?" y' know. If God's so great, you know, bu' I think
 187 that you have so many good things that do happen an' s– you
 188 know, that sometimes – not that has to balance out – maybe that
 189 – I don't even think that's God sometimes. I think that's the other
 190 side of it all. An' – um – yeah, it's h– it's hard to explain, but I
 191 don't, I don't blame God or anything like that. I jus' pray that
 192 people make it through, do what I can to help, something like
 193 that.

194 **Interviewer:** Okay, and what about your attitude towards death? Does your
 195 faith have any impact on that?

196 **Sophie:** I – um – personally, I'm actually very scared of death. Um – jus'
 197 because I'm scared that I won't achieve what I want out of life
 198 before I pass away. I think lotsa people are like that. But – um
 199 – yeah, jus' (pause) think – I believe they go to a better place, so
 200 really it's – sometimes it's not that bad. I jus' – it's unfair.
 201 Sometimes it's un– I view it as unfair when people pass away
 202 an' they've say got lots to do, children in their life, they've got
 203 family to bring up. That's unfair, but again, I don't blame God, I
 204 jus' hope that he helps them through the situation, through the
 205 tough times. So, yeah.

206 **Interviewer:** Okay. Good. In what ways does your faith help to give your life a
 207 sense of purpose and fulfilment?

208 **Sophie:** Um- I think because it challenges me t– it challenges me to bring
 209 out the good – my faith – um – I sort of – that's how what I
 210 wanna do that's – I wanna – um – help people. I wanna – I
 211 wanna do religious teaching – um – I want to show people that
 212 the side of God not the whole "go to Church an' be a good
 213 Catholic" side, the whole – the more demonstrating – um –
 214 demonstrations of faith, helping people out an' stuff like that.
 215 That's just – yeah.

216 **Interviewer:** Good. Now we look at events and people in general and later
 217 on we'll come down to talk about Mum and Dad. In general,
 218 what events in your life have led to changes in your relationship
 219 with God?

220 **Sophie:** Um – both retreats that I attended. Um – Year 11 retreat not as
 221 much as Year 12 retreat. I had a – a brilliant time on the Year
 222 11 retreat, like it was – it was one of the best times in my life, but
 223 at – it really didn't associate very much with – like it did with
 224 God, but it's just because all my mates were on it an' it was just
 225 a really good time. I think Year 12 retreat because at first I didn't

226 think it would live up to Year 11 retreat but it so it is so spiritual it
 227 didn't matter – oh the surroundings were lovely because it was
 228 very quiet, very peaceful, but – um – I think because I saw God
 229 in other people an' that really, really shocked me, like some
 230 people I've known a majority of my life and I didn't actually know
 231 them. So that sort of bring – it jus' – yeah, Year 12 retreat – it's
 232 sort of hard to explain – um – the feelings you sort of have on
 233 that an' when you come off it but you – you are, I feel, changed
 234 an' stuff. Um – another thing also my grandad (pause) that sort
 235 of – it's – all of them sort of strengthen my faith more so, so
 236 yeah. Sort of lost what the question was half way through that.
 237 (laughs)

238 **Interviewer:** No, no. You did that well. Is there anything that people have said
 239 or done that have helped you grow closer to God, or even to
 240 move away from God?

241 **Sophie:** Um (pause) sometimes – oh – there was the one time when I
 242 was having a talk with a teacher an' – um – I – it wasn't moving
 243 away, it was moving – made me like strengthen my faith
 244 because –um – of their story of their life. Actually a few of – a
 245 few teachers – um – the stories of their lives – um – an' how
 246 they've coped, how they've – um – their belief an' faith in God
 247 have helped them through. That sort of – um – just gives you
 248 inspir– more inspiration to believe. Um – also jus' in general
 249 people who en– um – encourage you, people who help you out,
 250 sort of – like I said you see the – the God in the faith that they
 251 have and that jus' sort of is even more reason to believe an'
 252 have more strength an' stuff an' yeah.

253 **Interviewer:** Okay. Let's move on. Has your faith grown stronger or weaker
 254 in the last twelve months?

255 **Sophie:** Stronger.

256 **Interviewer:** Do you know why?

257 **Sophie:** Yeah. Because of all those things I mentioned about that
 258 happened in the last twelve months.

259 **Interviewer:** Good. What has been the impact of your school on your faith?

260 **Sophie:** Oh, like how my school has –

261 **Interviewer:** Yeah, has the school impacted on your faith?

262 **Sophie:** Yeah.

263 **Interviewer:** Would you like to say how it has?

264 **Sophie:** Um – I'll leave – because I've already explained retreats an' all
 265 that I can leave that out of it – um – I think jus' generally – um –
 266 in religious classes – um – different teachers have shown – um –
 267 – different sides of faith an' – um – God an' how they – um –
 268 believe how they interact, how they demonstrate an' – um – I
 269 think that even everyday school life, things that you see like
 270 maybe someone's dropped all their books an' the kids around –

271 everyone, like every kid will help pick up an' I think that the
 272 difference from high school an' primary school because it was
 273 not Catholic, not Catholic, it's just amazing. Everyone wants to
 274 help, everyone – um – an' jus' that a– that sort of atmosphere
 275 has – um – has changed my faith because it's more
 276 demonstrated than – um – taught. That's just how I would see it.
 277 Also so many – um – people wanting to join in in – um – Mass
 278 an' all – an' jus' everyone's jus' really great an' I jus' think
 279 because ev– because everyone gives it a go that's sort of
 280 showing how faith – everyone believes an' – how God affects
 281 their life an' stuff. So yeah.

282 **Interviewer:** Good. Have there been any significant people or moments in
 283 your school life that have led to changes in the way you think
 284 about God and relate to God?

285 **Sophie:** Yeah. It's hard to pinpoint it. I think Year 9 Religion. Mr Jones
 286 because he en– he encouraged me so much an' I got the
 287 Religious Award that year an' um an' I think that his way in
 288 teaching an' his way in how he views faith is so different to some
 289 people an' it's so inspirational to listen to some of his stories an'
 290 his teachings an' that's really – that really encouraged me, that
 291 really – I think that year was the year that I really came out with
 292 my faith an' my beliefs an' that's sort of my, if you like, climax of
 293 when I was ver– very faithful, learnt a lot an' – um – basically
 294 also because I'm not a person that will learn much – I know it's
 295 bad with someone just standing there an' telling me all these
 296 facts, I don't – I prefer the demonstration sort of side an' he –
 297 when with all – us all doing collages it really helped because you
 298 think you'd – I did a collage and I just thought it was a simple
 299 collage, but when he – you analyse it an' you just realise there's
 300 so much more an' it – that just really inspired me. That's why I
 301 think – yeah, that's – I jus' loved that year an' stuff.

302 **Interviewer:** Good.

303 **Sophie:** He's very inspirational. Also – um – Mr Bruce, just talking to him
 304 and his stories an' stuff, an' how he only came about his faith –
 305 y' know, all that – when he was a ch– it wasn't when he was my
 306 age, it wasn't in his younger years (*laughs*) – um – an' it jus' –
 307 that was really inspirational how he had turned to God an' stuff,
 308 so yeah.

309 **Interviewer:** Good. Has anything happened or been said in RE that has
 310 influenced you in your faith apart from what you have said?

311 **Sophie:** It's hard to – yeah – definitely things in R – Religion – um – it's
 312 not so much by the teachers though, it's also by the students –
 313 um – sharing their stories an' – um – their views. You sort of
 314 ca– accept what others say an' even you – you definitely learn
 315 things from – um – others' experiences, others' challenge–
 316 others – like their challenges an' stuff, so – yeah, probably that
 317 sort of thing.

318 **Interviewer:** You've already spoken about Mr Jones, but are there any other
319 teachers who have had an impact on your faith in God?

320 **Sophie:** Um – there's Miss Allanson. Also talking to her – um – learned
321 a lot about her on Retreat an' stuff, so – just her story an' her
322 life, that has – jus' something that stuck in my head lately – um –
323 when I talk to Mr Browning – 'cause he's helping me out with –
324 um – on the Achievers Programme – um – he – he said
325 something that made me cry – I don't even think – it's not even
326 because it was about God or anything, it's just he s– he sai– he
327 looked at me an' said, "Don't ever change, okay." An' I was jus'
328 like – oh! It was a really weird thing to say 'cause it wasn't
329 anything about – well, even though it was about me, it wasn't
330 about my personality, or anything, it was to do with my schooling
331 an' he said, "But don't ever change." An' I was like "Whaddye
332 mean?" An' he jus' like "Well, you're a great person." An' he jus'
333 said all this stuff an' I jus' – I couldn't believe he said it an' I jus'
334 thought it was – it was so appropriate for the time even though it
335 was so strange because it made me feel so much better about
336 myself an' that jus' sort of – you know, I cried from that (laughs) I
337 just walked inside an' Miss Donnelly said, "Why are you crying?"
338 An' I was like, "Sshhh. Mr Browning's so nice." I think jus'
339 because on that sort of thing – just really shocked me that
340 people can jus' be so nice like that. So he – yeah, he's a real –
341 Yeah, I jus' – I was jus' really shocked – um – so yeah.

342 **Interviewer:** Good. Well, we're into the last section now. We come down to
343 talking about family and in particular about your parents. If you
344 want to, you can talk about your siblings. So what have your
345 parents said or done that has prompted you to grow closer to
346 God or to move away from God?

347 **Sophie:** Um – my Dad is – even though with the whole my Auntie Sue
348 thing – she is on his side, but my Dad doesn't really get into
349 whole religious thing – I think I learnt a lot of respect to learn
350 about respect from my Dad. He's very much about respect.
351 That's his whole thing, so I've learnt a lot to be respectful of
352 other people's opinions – um – accepting what they think, like
353 just because someone doesn't believe in God, I don't turn
354 around an' say, "That's wrong." Like I – an' – an' I don't feel
355 obligated to encourage them because that's their decision, that's
356 their choice. I don't want them to turn around to me an' say,
357 "Well, you shouldn't believe in God." So I think I've learned that
358 from my Dad. But my Mum because – my Mum's like my best
359 friend an' I – I can tell her everything an' I jus' feel like, (pause)
360 you know, um – not that my Mum is my God, but like she – the
361 way I talk to God is also the way I talk to Mum, so – um – also
362 because Mum's the Catholic sort of side, her values an' beliefs
363 I've, y' know, accepted into my life, an' that's what I've grown up
364 with, going to Church, - um – jus' – yeah, how he's helped her
365 through hard times as well and she's always stayed faithful to
366 God as well, so she's sort of an inspiration to do the same. So –

367 **Interviewer:** Good. You actually answered a number of questions I was
368 going to ask. You've done really well. You know how you were
369 telling the story about your Auntie Sue an' your Dad, do you have
370 any other stories that describe how each of your parents have
371 influenced you?

372 **Sophie:** Um – I think – um – jus' – really because – because my Mum –
373 um – grew – she grew up in Northam an' – but her parents, my
374 Nonna, Nonno came over from Italy when they were younger,
375 an' jus' listening to their struggles through life – um – like how
376 many – how their parents when they passed away – um – how
377 they dealt with it, being over in Australia, being so far away, an'
378 it's not like they could– they didn't have the money to quickly go
379 back – um – with their siblings passing away, sort of – I think it's
380 through them more – more so – 'cause my Mum sort of tells me
381 all about them, so that's how – um – jus' how they've went from
382 so little to so much an' how they've always stayed so faithful, –
383 um – stayed so strong. I think – um – when there was – there
384 was a bush fire in Northam – um – a couple of years ago, six or
385 seven years ago, maybe, - um – an' just how – um – an' they
386 lost nearly everything. You know, they worked so hard in their
387 life, but they never ever turned away from God. They always
388 had so much faith an' that sort of again encourages you to stay
389 strong an' stuff like that. So yeah.

390 **Interviewer:** Excellent. Well, okay, Sophie K. I think maybe we could stop at
391 this point. I will pick up some of the things you have said in the
392 next two interviews. Thank you.

393 **Sophie:** Thank you very much.