



Your Life  
Your Faith

# Your Story

Exploring the spiritual experiences of young Australians



## Participant Information Statement

### Summary Statement:

YOUR STORY is an Australian research project exploring the spiritual experiences, beliefs and influences that have shaped the faith of young people. It involves taking an online survey that takes around 40 minutes to complete. The website and survey link for this project can be found at [www.yourstory.ridley.edu.au](http://www.yourstory.ridley.edu.au).

### Why is this research being done?

The research is investigating how young people in Australia make sense of their experience of God. We are interested in how young people see God interacting in their lives (if at all). We are seeking to understand the stories of how young people have come to their current understanding and experience across the course of their life.

### Investigators:

This research project is being conducted by Dr Graham Stanton from Ridley College, Melbourne, and Dr Rowan Lewis from the Australian College of Ministry (ACOM).

Graham can be contacted by email at [g.stanton@ridley.edu.au](mailto:g.stanton@ridley.edu.au) or by phone on 03 9207 4800 (ext 919).

Rowan can be contacted by email at [rlewis@acom.edu.au](mailto:rlewis@acom.edu.au) or by phone on 1800 672 692.

### Why have I been asked to participate?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a young person in Australia, aged 16-20 years who has some connection with a Christian church, school, or community organisation. There is no requirement that you be super involved in faith or religious life. Rather the study will simply rely on your willingness to genuinely and frankly talk about where you are up to in terms of faith and how this may (or may not) have changed over the last few years.

### What would I be asked to do?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete an on-line survey. The survey will ask a series of questions related to your faith and spirituality as it relates to your childhood, early teen and present day experiences and understanding. It will also ask about how various people and groups have interacted with your faith. The survey is a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended (extended response) questions, and we estimate it will take about 40 minutes to complete.

### Possible Follow up conversation:

You can indicate in the consent form if you would be willing to participate in an optional follow-up interview with either Graham or Rowan via a video conference or telephone call. The interview would invite you to comment further about the information you have provided. The conversation will be recorded so that Graham and Rowan can listen to it again afterwards. The conversation would take about 45 minutes.

### **What choice do I have?**

Whether or not you participate in this research is up to you. If you are under the age of 18, we will also need to have permission from your parent or guardian.

You will not be disadvantaged in any way if you choose not to participate.

If you do choose to participate, you can change your mind at a later stage and withdraw from the project whenever you want to. You do not need to explain why you are withdrawing. If you choose to withdraw from the project you can ask for any information provided by you to be removed from the project.

### **What are the risks and benefits of participating?**

There are no risks to your personal or social safety whether or not you choose to participate in this research. Even if you do choose to participate, you do not have to answer any particular question you don't want to.

If you received an invitation to participate in this research from a church, youth group, or school, the leaders from your group/school will be available to talk with about anything that is raised for you by being involved in the research. Counselling services are freely available through Kid's Helpline, 1800 55 1800 <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>, Lifeline, 13 11 14, or Headspace, <https://headspace.org.au/>.

We expect that the knowledge gained from what you contribute to this study may help Christian leaders care for and support young people like yourself in the future.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your survey responses are stored in password protected cloud storage. Any phone or video interviews will be digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed for further analysis. We will ask for your name in order to match responses from the survey with possible follow up interviews. Once your responses have been collated, your data will have your name removed to maintain confidentiality.

Only the research team directly associated with Graham and Rowan will have access to the information you provide. You will not be personally identified in any way by the study or any publications. All files containing personal information will be kept secure, password protected and only accessed by the researchers. As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. This will be de-identified, so that you cannot be recognised from what you said. All recordings and data collected as part of this project will be destroyed after five years.

### **Is this Study Funded and what are the benefits of the research?**

This research is being funded by youth organisations connected with Converge Oceania, a sub-group of Converge International (<https://www.converge.international/>). Converge International is a cooperative movement of Christian organisations and leaders from over 60 countries. Converge seeks to empower and support young people and their faith journeys through research-informed practice. The findings of the study are intended to assist community-based and church-based youth organisations to improve their understanding and support of young people and their faith journeys. Findings from the study will be published in a report and made publicly available.

### **What if I have concerns?**

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Australian College of Theology (ACT) (Approval No. EC2102)

If you have any concerns or complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, you can contact the secretary of the ACT Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address: [ethics@actheology.edu.au](mailto:ethics@actheology.edu.au)

### **How do I get involved?**

Please make sure you have read and understood this Information Statement before you decide to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you have any questions, contact Graham or Rowan directly.

If you are willing to participate, please go to [www.yourstory.ridley.edu.au](http://www.yourstory.ridley.edu.au). At this website you will find information about the study and a link to commence the survey. The first part of the survey asks for your consent to participate in the project. If you are under 18 years of age, you must also have your parent or guardian complete relevant sections of the consent form.

### **Further information**

If you (or your parent or guardian) would like any more information please contact any of the co-researchers using the email addresses or telephone numbers provided below.

Thank you for considering this invitation.



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