

# Asking the big questions

'Open House' is a live, three-hour Sunday night radio talk show — exploring 'life, faith and culture'. *Open House Volume 3* is the latest book in a series of the 'best' interviews from the radio show in transcript form. Writer, speaker and 'Open House' host, Sheridan Voysey, faced some questions himself about the book.

**What did Ray Martin reveal to you that we wouldn't already know through his autobiography?**

Ray was very generous with his time and was as gracious in person as he is on TV. What was most interesting to me was Ray's answer to the question of faith. He was the face of 2008's World Youth Day TV coverage — which he relished — but what did he himself believe? Ray described himself as 'a believer' with a disdain for the arguments of aggressive atheists like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. Yet when pushed, wasn't sure what he 'really' believed.

**'Open House' is a show about 'life, faith and culture', yet Alain De Botton and Bryce Courtenay reveal in the book that they're atheists. Why have them on your show?**

For two reasons: firstly, sometimes we don't exactly know what our high-profile guests believe because no one else has asked them — and we're keen to know. If the conversation naturally moves in the direction of faith, we ask the question.

Bryce Courtenay is an example. I'd never heard him address his personal beliefs and so I asked him. I'll never forget his reply. Growing up in a strict, punishing church-run orphanage in

South Africa during the apartheid era, he said, 'I know all about the God of wrath, but have never met the God of love'. As a committed Christian, that broke my heart. I asked him if he'd like to explore the 'God of love' but he said the issue was settled for him.

Secondly, I'm fascinated with how people form their beliefs. The philosopher Alain de Botton said his atheism was a psychological issue — a case of him being faithful to his atheist father by denying a 'heavenly' Father.

**To what degree have other guests challenged your own beliefs?**

Each week we explore a major issue affecting Australian society — whether euthanasia, refugee policy, surrogacy, the mass evictions of the poor during the Delhi games — and I am constantly challenged to form a position on such things that is both compassionate and practical.

Faith-wise, I'm constantly reassessing what I believe through the guests that we have. This can be an uncomfortable program to do as a believer: we try and address faith issues critically as well as inspirationally. Yet I'm more convinced now than ever of the reality of a personal God revealed in Jesus.

**The chapter on West Australian doctor, Sean George, recounts his supposed return to life after death. Do you believe him?**

I do. Dr George was driving from Esperance to Kalgoorlie when he experienced chest pains. He pulled into a small country clinic and soon died of a heart attack. Fifty-five minutes of CPR and electric shock therapy — all recorded by the clinic's equipment, and confirmed by the medical personnel present — couldn't bring him back. His wife drove down from Kalgoorlie, walked into the room, picked up her husband's cold hand and prayed a simple and desperate prayer. And then ... well, Sean told me his story as a very-much-alive man.

**What personal lessons have you learnt through talking to your various guests over the years?**

Firstly, to have some dreams, but to choose them carefully. You might remember the singer Yazz who had a hit with 'The Only Way is Up' in 1988. She's in the book. She reached her dream of musical success, but it sucked the life out of her. Have some dreams! But hold them loosely and have them confirmed by other godly followers of Christ.

Secondly, no matter how loud the Dawkins and Hitchens of the world holler, the question of



► Sheridan Voysey, 'Open House' radio host.

faith won't go away. I've spoken to high-ranking scientists who believe and secular thinkers who aren't satisfied in life. Human beings need a roadmap to live by.

Thirdly, the Church may have its faults, but I am just overwhelmed at the many feats being accomplished by the faithful. My faith is greatly inspired by such people.

*Open House Volume 3* is available from Koorong, Word and other good bookshops, and from [www.hope1032.com.au](http://www.hope1032.com.au). For more on 'Open House', to subscribe to the podcast or follow the show on Facebook or Twitter, visit [www.openhouseonline.com.au](http://www.openhouseonline.com.au). Sheridan Voysey can be found at [www.thethoughtfactory.net](http://www.thethoughtfactory.net) and [www.facebook.com/sheridanvoysey](http://www.facebook.com/sheridanvoysey).

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