

Why Story?



At Element we believe it is important for people around us to understand the changes that are taking place in our own lives' based on the work of Christ in us. To help others understand what Baptism is and what it means to those being baptized on a personal level, we have asked them to share their life and stories with you, those attending and those online, in a more personal way than maybe you are use to.

In Baptism we are making a making a public statement about our life and commitment to walk in the ways Jesus calls us. Many people only get the Jesus "as seen on TV" and don't understand what Jesus does in "real life" or what following Him looks like on a practical level. Baptism is not magical, but it is a deeply spiritual event that reflects the work Jesus has done in our lives. The act of Baptism is symbolic in that we identify with the death and resurrection of Christ. We are essentially being buried (by going under the water) and raised to walk in new life (by coming out of the water).

The entire point is public identification with Christ and His work within us. That He is our great God and savior that has come to restore a broken humanity that cannot have a relationship with God on our own. He is the Redeemer, He is the Remedy, He is the Hope, and He is our Life.

We also have the hope that one day you too will come to the saving knowledge of trusting in Jesus with your life. It makes all the difference in the world.

Aaron

OUR STORIES

January 23, 2011



ELEMENT
christian church

Patrick Shipsey

This past summer, I made the decision to rededicate my life to Christ.

My name is Patrick Shipsey, and I'm 16 years old. For the first eight of those sixteen years, my family belonged to a local church. After that, we started to bounce around, looking for a church home, but the more that we searched, the less I felt at home with any given church. We would start attending a church, I'd be told that this was the last move. A few years later, it was time for a rinse, lather, and repeat.

Naturally, being raised in a Christian home, I understood the idea of God. I did AWANA from Sparkies through sixth grade, so you couldn't tell ME I didn't know Jesus. I took pride in how many verses I memorized and got indignant when my leader told me (correctly) I would've made a great Pharisee. I had given my life to Jesus, of course. The only problem was that at the time I was all of six years old. See, they scared the tiny pants off of me with stories about Hell and said that if I wanted to stay out, I had to say this little prayer and I'd go to Heaven. Given that at the time I still thought Spiderman was way cooler than Batman because Batman doesn't even have any powers and what kind of superhero can't even pick up a car I mean COME ON, it's unsurprising that they got me to buy fire insurance. (If this paragraph is altered in the final version, you can blame Aaron.)

My family made our final church move when I was in eighth grade or so, when we came to Element during the very first few weeks. I remember when it was still a ramshackle, run-down, condemned former car dealership with a leaky roof and no chairs. For those who weren't there in the beginning, trust me, the change has been massive. Like, we have chairs now. I started going to the Element youth group, and found myself connecting in a way I never really had before. Those first youth groups, it was Ryan Edwards playing "Come Thou Fount" on his acoustic guitar to 12 kids in a semicircle. I watched as the Spirit moved and built this community of Christians from the ground up. As I saw God moving in Element, I wanted to be able to mean the words I was singing, to experience God rather than just "knowing" Him. I figured that I needed to take another step, but I never felt like I was quite "ready", just a tad too "sinner-y" for Him. I told myself, "Once I take care of this one sin, THEN I'll get back to Jesus", as though I thought I could ever approach the God of the Universe under my own steam.

One Sunday, the teaching had to do with the full meaning of Jesus' last words on the Cross. Usually translated as "It is finished", the word "tetelestai" is really an accounting term. It's best translated as "paid in full." A friend finally helped me realize that "paid in full" means exactly that. This past summer, I made the decision to rededicate my life to Christ.

God has given me more clarity than I've ever had. That daily feeling of giving my burdens to God reminds me what an idiot I was for acting like I could ever work off my debt. Every day I'm reminded of what He did for me, and because of that I want to use the gifts God has given me for His kingdom and publically confess my faith.

*"Let not conscience make you linger,
nor of fitness fondly dream;
all that he requires as fitness
is to know your need of him.*

*Come, you weary, heavy laden,
lost and ruined by the fall;
if you tarry till you're better,
you will never come at all."*

--Joseph Hart

Stacie Cappello

The singular thing I was afraid of, but loved the most, was the accountability of becoming a part of the family of God.

Hey there! I'm Stacie Cappello, I'm 31, and I'm not a Santa Maria-an. I was born in Southern California, and have moved all over California and Arizona. I am a single, divorced mother of three beautiful children, as well as a full time employee and student.

When, I finally decided to say "Yes! I want to be baptized" it was awesome. Actual tears welled up in my eyes and my stubborn heart melted (and still today they well up and I melt all over again). Baptism wasn't an easy or light hearted decision for me, I spent several weeks grilling people on whether or not it was okay to be baptized, not just because I wanted too, but because I wasn't sure if it was okay for me. I was told by a few people to "read the bible" (I think I even started an argument over sprinkling or immersion water baptisms). But I learned some very valuable things about baptism and the decision to open my life to Christ and let the people of God come along beside me to share this path together.

Why was all of this such a big deal? Well, because I have spent the greater part of my childhood alone, and an even greater part of my adult life lonely. Many times, as a single mom, I feel as if I have nowhere to turn. The singular thing I was afraid of, but loved the most, was the accountability of becoming a part of the family of God.

I grew up the second child of a single unmarried mother who claimed to be Catholic. My mother and grandmother made my brother and I attend Catholic schools (where we were baptized and raised to love God and to know Jesus as our savior). Following Jesus was only Monday - Friday from 8 AM - 2:30 PM, while at school, but not as a member of our family, that was a different story. In our family God was only "the Big Guy upstairs" who was "watching us." We never even attended church together as a family, as my grandmother kept protesting that she would be struck by lightning if she ever entered the church.

In the fifth grade I made the decision I didn't want to attend Catholic School anymore. My brother was still living with my grandmother in Bakersfield, and I was an "only child" living with my mom and her boyfriend in Marina Del Rey. I was enrolled in a public school closer to where they worked, and so my already minimal relationship with God ended.

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In high school I went through a few very harsh period where I didn't want to be alive anymore; I didn't trust anyone and felt devastatingly alone. I began to think, just like my grandmother, that if I went to church I'd be struck by lightning too. But just because I couldn't go into the building didn't mean I couldn't still have my conversations with "the Big Guy upstairs." I dealt with life as the cards were dealt, and with each broken road, I climbed new mountains alone (or at least I thought I was alone).

In early 2000 I moved to Stockton where I met my now ex husband. In 2003 we were married and it was a nightmare. My mother didn't even bother coming to the wedding as she flew off with another new boyfriend to Georgia. My life was turned upside down in 2005; I was pregnant, jobless, and about to run out of unemployment when my husband decided he didn't want the responsibility of being a parent. Unable to find a job, I called my best friend who worked for her father at the time, and she offered me a job. I moved back to Southern California where I moved across the street from a Catholic Church in Culver City. I kept seeing God working in my life, I could hear Him calling to me but no matter how I tried to put my fears behind me, I couldn't make myself feel comfortable enough to walk into that church alone.

Shortly after I moved to Santa Maria in late 2007, the church that was to become Element opened up. Some twenty plus people with lawn chairs all gathered around a funky white board with dust everywhere, and I felt my calling into something much bigger than myself. Don't get me wrong, I was scared, but once I heard Aaron speaking God's word, my life slowly started changing. The best thing I found in this construction dust filled building, was God...or really He found me, because I stopped running from Him and fell hard into his arms and in love with Him.

Don't get me wrong, it didn't happen all at once and there wasn't some crazy flashback musical montage; actually a few times I took off running like a gunshot goose. There is truly a difference before Jesus saved me and today. Before Christ my sins were my own and I felt like I could "shuck" them off; but now every sin hurts (as it should) and I search out now to mend my wrongs and to be a better person. I am convicted and I have changed.

In April my grandfather, a man who raised me like his own child, a man who made the biggest impact on my life, got sick and passed away.

Continued...

Stacie Cappello (Continued)

Again I felt alone. As I sat in the hospital room with my grandfather as he took his last breaths, I called my friend Paul and asked him to pray with me. The priest had already come in but his words were so empty to me; as I listened to Paul's prayer I felt the loneliness leave. Now when I feel it creeping in, I ask God to be with me; when my heart aches I now ask for the strength to see past it. That trip opened my eyes to God's grace and love.

I prayed one night after I returned home, "Lord, if baptism is the right thing for me, show me, help me see the path You want for me" (there was more to it but you get the gist.) The next morning on my way to work, out of the blue, Paul sent me a message; "turn on your radio to 91.5 they are talking about baptism." It's weird that God can even speak through a radio.

Jesus has been with me my entire life but I lived like most people...like God is in my pocket and I just pulled Him out when I have selfishly needed Him. This was my "Lord help me speech," but as the waters cleared, or I wanted something that didn't jive with scripture, well, back into the pocket He'd go where I didn't have to answer for my actions.

On the day He wouldn't go quietly into my pocket anymore, all of the things I had been doing hit me so hard. I felt the first taste of conviction, and I cried, I really cried. God has been putting people in my life to help me grow in Him; and He's invited me, through others, to become more of a part of learning about Him. Through all the pain of my own decisions He has opened my eyes to see past myself and trust Him, to forgive myself as He has forgiven me, and to lose my shame the way he put my shame away. He has lifted a loneliness that has been built in me for nearly 30 years, and given me the faith of His unconditional love. In hindsight I have been running from God for a very long time, and now I see I was never alone and that I can live a better life loving and serving God, because He has never stopped pursuing me.

This is the why and the how that I have come to be baptized, I am now part of something much bigger and loving, I am now part of God's family.

Jacob Shanbrom

I want to live for Christ and follow Him for the rest of my life...

My name is Jacob Robert Shanbrom, to most people I'm known as Chicken Little (it's a nickname from people who love me, so it stuck). I was born on June, 3rd, 1994 in Los Angeles. My walk with God mainly began when I moved to Santa Maria at the age of 7.

My relationship with Christ didn't start with a crazy "miracle," just the miracle that Jesus loves me, even before I knew about Him. His love for me was, and is, deeper than I could imagine, and because of that fact my life has been changed forever.

Before I moved to Santa Maria I didn't really know who God was. After I had an awesome time at church one day I knew I was meant to go back. I knew God was calling me to follow Him and I surrendered my life to Jesus and His calling. As I grew older and more mature so did my understanding of God. I have developed a deeper relationship with Christ, and I feel now that He is guiding me in the path He would like me to walk.

Throughout my walk there have been many people who have influenced and encouraged me, but without a doubt the biggest influences has been Aaron, James, and Rocky. I have great memories of bonding with them over them beating me up then teaching me about the bible (usually in that order).

As a high school student I have a lot going on; trying to get into college and all the madness that comes with that, but I always find time to spend with God. I know and understand that He is the one who gives me purpose and strength so I look for it in Him. I'm know that as a child of God I should get baptized, so today I'm taking that plunge (so to speak). I want to live for Christ and follow Him for the rest of my life, and this is part of that journey with Him. I am so happy that as a church family you are all supporting me in this.

Desiree Zozaya

My guilt has now turned to confidence because He sees the person that I can be, and will become...

My name is Desiree Marie Zozaya and here is a little bit of my story of how Jesus saved my life.

I grew up in a drug infested home. My mom was an alcoholic and a heroin addict. The house was full of domestic violence; my dad raised us and me, being the oldest of 4 kids at the time, had to play the mom role. Jesus saved my mother when I was about 10, she still struggled with her addiction, but she would take us to church. There was always something about church that made me feel like home.

A “church” was a place I felt I could be free and didn’t have to worry about being afraid. When I was 11 the church gave an “altar call,” where you go forward and “give your life to Jesus.” When I was 11 I went forward and I said the “sinner’s prayer” and something inside me changed. It was the most beautiful feeling, a presence of peace that I have never experienced before. All I wanted to do was sing.

My parents got divorced and as I got older I was bounced back and forth between my parents. I needed to take care of my younger sister so I eventually moved back with my father.

My dad’s house then turned into a drug house, where manufacturing was a constant thing. I got involved with drugs and felt so lost. But even though I was doing drugs does not mean that God was; He was still calling and looking out for me; He never left me.

I lived through multiple scary situations (it is one of the reasons I truly believe we have a real enemy). But Jesus is always faithful and always provided a way out for me. I always tried to make things work on my own, never fully surrendering my life, but every time I tried on my own I only dug a deeper hole.

After finding out that I was going to be a mother at the age of 18, I had to get my sister and my unborn baby out of that crack house. 3 weeks after I left, the house got raided and my dad went to prison. I then went to live with my grandparents because my mom wasn’t doing well with her addiction and I didn’t want to be in that environment.

My Aunt started taking me back to church. I did enjoy being back, but I felt like such a failure inside because of how often I had let God down. So being stubborn, and not just giving it all to God, I thought I could make my own right choice for my son and I. I started dating a man whom I thought really loved me, turned out he was just very controlling and he just wanted me all to his self. I had no friends and never left the house unless I left with him.

After 8 years of physical abuse, and putting my son through that, I looked at my 9 month old and decided that I didn’t want this for her. I had seen my mother get beaten and I didn’t want my baby girl to see her mom go through the same. I didn’t want her believing that abuse was love, the cycle needed to stop.

I packed up my kids and moved here, to Santa Maria, where my family lives. I felt free to start my life with my children, but I still didn’t turn to Jesus, I turned to alcohol and partying. Having friends and “freedom” felt exhilarating to me at first, but I am so glad that Jesus kept pursuing me. He kept speaking to my heart, “Is this the woman I called you to be?” “Are you the kind of mother your children need?”

It all came back to me: Jesus loves me. I saw who I was and hated who I had become without Him. The devil was constantly reminding of what a bad mom, or disgusting person I am, but Jesus called me home, and called me His child. I fell on my face and cried out to God to forgive me and to change me, because I know I cannot do it myself.

He gave me the scripture Isaiah 51:21-23 (*This is what your Sovereign LORD says, your God, who defends his people: See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again.*)

That was proof that my God was talking to me. He knew that I had a problem with drinking, parting, and being promiscuous...and that He was going to take all that away from me. My guilt has now turned to confidence because He sees the person that I can be, and will become, and not the person stuck in sin. I love him, because He first loved me, and I can’t wait to be baptized to show that my life is committed to Him, by faith, and I no longer need to fear...anything.