

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 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

April 17th, 2016



ELEMENT
christian church

KELLI SHEFFIELD

My name is Kelli Sheffield and I was born and raised in Santa Maria. I was not raised in a religious household as my dad did not believe in God, but my mom had a bible she kept by her bed. I would see her reading that Bible from time to time, but she never went to church. In one sense I have always believed in God, but never took the time to really know Him. Even as a kid I can remember a bus that would come to my neighborhood and pick us kids up for Sunday School and I loved it!

In high school I met my husband. He was Catholic, but not practicing and would only attend church on holidays. During our marriage, we would occasionally attend church where our daughter went to school, but it was never consistent. When my Mom died in 2000, I was so sad and angry at God. I turned away from Him for a long, long time.

During my marriage I was also estranged from my best friend. In 2003, after 21 years, my husband and I divorced. Three years after my divorce, I had to change dentists and picked a random dentist from my insurance book, made an appointment and went. When I walked in, there was my estranged best friend, smiling at me from behind the reception desk. She said, "I've been waiting for you" and all the years we spent apart melted away. I know God put me on that path to be reunited with my best friend as it brought me to Him as well.

My best friend, or my "BFF" as I call her, explained to me how in the years we had spent apart she had become a Christian and started following Jesus. While she shared her story I immediately thought of my other best friend who had become a follower of Christ. I believe God had His hand in both of these encounters because it was God also drawing me to relationship with Him as

He surrounded me with two women who loved Jesus and were both my best friends.

The three of us became, and still are, very close. I would attend church with them here and there and they became my role models even though I didn't know it at the time.

When my Dad passed away in December 2015, I felt I was even more lost as both of my parents were now gone. I started talking to a former coworker about God and how I want to get back into a church, but I felt like an outsider. She told me I needed to find a place I could call my home. I asked a friend that I knew went to Element if it would be ok if I visited; he invited me to come to Christmas Eve services and I've been attending ever since. It was very hard for me to walk in the door that first time, into a room of full of strangers, but I instantly felt at home and everyone was so friendly; I knew I'd found my home by the time the service was over.

As I look back at my life, I can tell you every single instance Jesus was there for me, even though I didn't realize it at the time. This is an amazing realization for me, especially since I was so resistant to God's call and my faith always seemed to wane.

About a month after I'd been coming to Element, I was lying on my bed, and my emotions overcame me and I started to cry. The tears were not of sadness, but of joy because I realized I believed the Gospel and now have faith that Jesus has saved me. I can finally feel my heart changing as I desire to follow Him. I am now at a place where I cannot wait to see what He has planned for me for the rest of my life.

JOSE LOPEZ JR.

Hello, my name is Jose Lopez Jr and I'm 30 years old. I was born and raised in Santa Maria. I have been attending church with my aunt for 7 years off and on. Recently, I found myself wanting more understanding of the gospel and wasn't finding it. So I made the decision to explore other churches. When I mentioned it to my friend, who has a faith I respect, he told me that he was attending Element. I decided to come with my friend. When I did I instantly felt a sense of belonging and enjoyed the way that Aaron preached the word and applied it to our daily lives.

I wanted to take this opportunity to get baptized to show others, along with myself, that I love Christ and am willing to give my life to Him.

In my teenage years I always felt something missing, relationships with friends and family have always seemed like I longed for something more. The feeling of being alone overwhelmed me at times, and the lack of guidance spiritually had left me lost. That's when God called me to His name and I made the commitment to seek Him out. I started to develop a relationship with Christ, my Lord and Savior, which filled my heart with so much joy, peace, and love.

Five years ago my mother got sick and was unable to care for herself. I made a promise to her that I'd care for her 24/7, giving up work and school to be by her side. My mother had become my best friend and we developed a bond that I will cherish forever. One year ago, tragedy struck when my mother passed away, leaving me heart broken. Then just four months ago tragedy struck again when my father passed away of cancer.

Now I truly felt lost.

Amazingly, my faith in Christ grew stronger and I have been able to come out of the depression I was in over the last year. Hearing the gospel regularly and applying it to my life, I believe, has prepared me for the hardships and challenges to come.

After losing both parents I made the commitment to follow Christ knowing that He sacrificed Himself for the forgiveness of my sins and my salvation. In doing so, my attitude toward life has been nothing but joy and love for others, which stems from my Father loving me unconditionally.

Just knowing Jesus has been by my side through the good and bad times has given me a sense of peace in my life, which encourages me to tell others what He has done for me. I'm thankful and blessed for each day God has given me, and I don't want to take anything for granted while I live for Him each day.

Thank you all for sharing this special moment in my life as I proclaim my life to my Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.

HANNAH WEEKLEY

My name is Hannah Weekley and I am seventeen years old. I was born at Marian Hospital in Santa Maria. My family and I were looking for a new church to join, and we had heard great things about Element. So we decided to stop by, and ended up really enjoying the services.

I was raised in a Christian home and have learned about God my whole life. At a young age I sat with my mom and asked God to save me, though at that time I did not fully understand the idea of accepting Christ into my heart, but it was still an amazing opportunity to surrender to Jesus.

When I was twelve I understood more fully who Jesus was and is and I “re-asked” God into my heart; I definitely felt more at peace knowing that I had been completely cleansed of my sins. I follow Jesus not only because He is my Lord and Savior, but He gave His life in order to save mine. I always feel much stronger and more at peace knowing that God is always with me; I feel more confident knowing that I can do all things through Him.

My God is also a God of forgiveness, and knowing that He has forgiven me of all of my sins, brings peace and comfort; it encourages me to be more forgiving of others. As I grow closer to the Lord, I find myself to be a lot more thankful for everything that I have been blessed with. I am content with all the amazing things He has provided me, and I find that when I have a strong walk with God I no longer want for things I do not have, but feel peace.

My walk and relationship with God has taught me to be honest, forgiving, thankful, and has brought a lot more peace to my life. I am so blessed to be able to have the opportunity to be baptized with Element, and to have the opportunity to publicly show my dedication to Christ.

JAMES WEEKLEY

Hi, my name is James Weekley and I am 12 years old. I was born at Marian Hospital and have lived in Santa Maria my entire life.

A while ago my family was looking for a good church to attend, and we found Element. I’ve gone to church since I was very young. I grew up in a Christian home and was taught Christ at a young age. When I was 5 and with my mom, I accepted Christ as my Savior and understood He died for my sins.

Around the age of 11, I came to the place where I believe I more fully understood the meaning of surrendering to and following Christ as my Savior. I understand that He died for my sins and rose from the grave to restore me to life. I have been a strong follower of Christ, and the more I learned about Him the deeper my connection became.

I want to get baptized because I recently put all of my trust in Christ and I want to publically show that I am one of His servants, forever. I also want to let others know I trust Jesus and want to live my life for Him. Since I have put my trust in the Lord, I’ve been more at peace and live without fear. It is a joy to walk with Him every day and to know that I am walking the right path. I am thankful to share this experience with my Lord and Savior and Element family.

CHRIS WEEKLEY

My name is Chris Weekley and I am 20 years old. I was born at Valley Hospital in Santa Maria and have lived here my whole life. My family was looking for a new church to attend and we found Element.

I grew up in a Christian home and have always been taught about Christ. At the age of four, I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. You may think that sounds young, but I knew enough then to know I wanted to be with the Lord for the rest of my life.

At the age of seven, I started to grasp the deeper meaning of being saved and doubled down on my commitment to the Lord. Around five years ago a baptism came up that I could have been a part of, but I did not feel ready at that moment and decided to wait. Since then I have learned more about the meaning of being baptized and decided, that when the next baptism came up, I wanted to be a part of it. Over time I started to believe that the enemy has been trying to stop me from getting baptized. I keep running into obstacles that cause me to use excuses such as work, school, and lack of time. This time though, no obstacle will stop me.

God, in all His power, has provided me with another opportunity to be baptized, and I decided that I was going to take it. It is time to let everyone know that I love Jesus and trust Him with my eternity.

Want more information about JESUS?

**Ask any of the people baptizing,
and the Element Leaders,
or read more here:**



*[http://www.ourelement.org/about/
what-we-believe/statement-of-faith](http://www.ourelement.org/about/what-we-believe/statement-of-faith)*