

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.

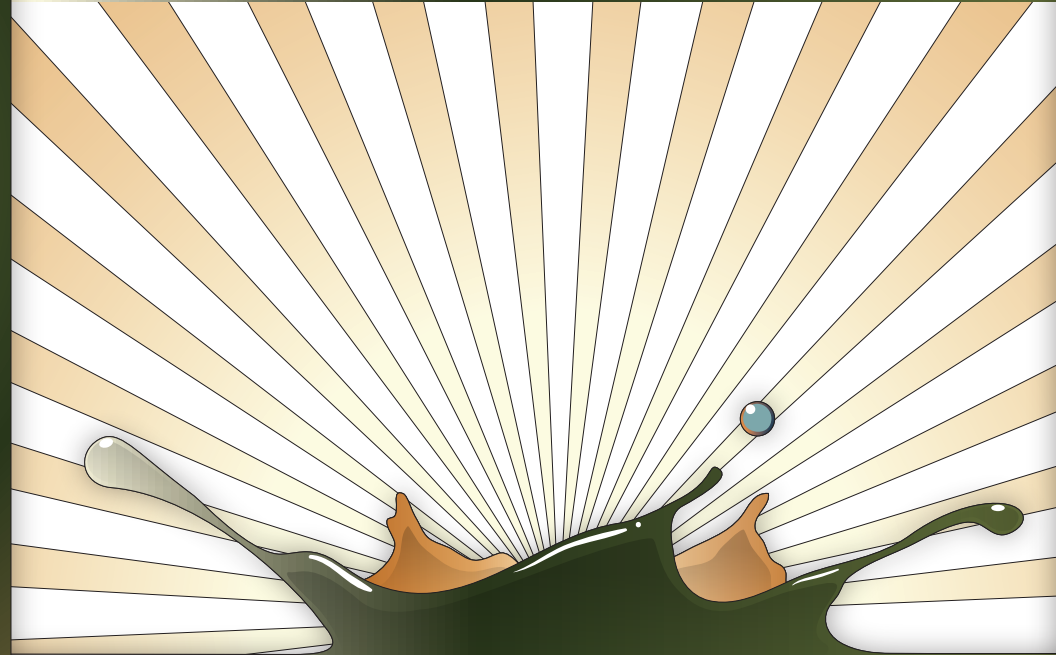
We also have the hope that one day you too will come to the saving knowledge of trusting in Jesus with your life. It makes all the difference in the world.

Aaron



OUR STORIES

September 5th, 2021



ELEMENT
christian church

JOHN (JOHN JOHN) KLUG

My name is John Klug. I am 10 years old and will be 11 next month! I have been coming to Element since I was really little. I have loved Jesus for a long time so I'm ready to get baptized now.

I want to be baptized because I want to show all the people around me that I am a Christian and have chosen to follow Jesus. By doing what Jesus tells me to do, I feel closer to Him. The Holy Spirit helps me to do what is right.

I believe that Jesus saved me from my sins. He died on the cross for me. I know that without Jesus dying on the cross, I would be lost. With Jesus and His sacrifice, I get to live forever with Him.

I promise that I will follow Jesus for the rest of my life because He loves me, and I love Him.

KEVIN KEINERT

My name is Kevin Keinert. I was raised in the Lutheran Church, baptized as an infant, and have believed in Jesus Christ for as long as I can remember. However, I was happy keeping God "at arm's length," going to Church on Sunday and only thanking Him occasionally for the blessings He gave me.

I have had trials in my life that God carried me through, but I've never really relied on Him (or so I thought) to get through each day. I've never felt the need to seek His will for my life. I chose to ignore the fact that many of my thoughts, words, and deeds were displeasing to Him.

On February 17th 2020, that all changed. God allowed a trial to enter my life that has turned my entire world upside-down and changed me forever. Christianity to me was always about religion, doing the right thing (at least what I thought was "the right thing"), but I was lacking "relationship" with Jesus.

I know now that God is calling me to Himself. He has always been calling me, I just wasn't listening. On February 29th 2020 (leap day) I asked Jesus to come into my heart, make the changes He wants to, and direct my life moving forward. One and a half years later, my trial continues and is not working out as I've been praying for, but I know God works all things together for our good, and for His glory, when we have faith and trust in Him.

My baptism today is public acknowledgement that I want to die to myself and be raised in Christ. I want to spend the rest of my life seeking God, asking Him daily for guidance and peace, and doing the best that I can to live in and accept His will for my life.

JENNIFER ITHIER

Hello, my name is Jennifer and I live in Santa Maria with my husband and three kids.

Growing up I was hardly ever around “the church,” nor did I have a clear picture of who God was. I struggled trying to understand why God would allow things to happen in my life with which I struggled, I also didn’t feel very deserving of His love because of this. However, as I got older, I started my search.

When I was around age 17 I came across people that loved God and spoke of Jesus and what He sacrificed for us. From then on I began to seek Him too. I very quickly fell onto a trap of constantly wearing a mask of happiness, trying to show perfection like everything was always okay. It wasn’t okay. I was in pain, scared, hurt, ashamed, full of guilt and hope was questionable. I had a problem opening up to people, even if they were followers of Christ. I was constantly searching for people, places and things to make me feel better, but I never found it and it never felt better.

I wanted to feel what people said they felt when they talked about Jesus, which was freedom and rest.

I moved to California from New Jersey 10 years ago and decided it was time to get planted at a church. In 2013 I walked into Element late, but I was still welcomed. Jesus showed the gospel to me that day. I left crying, touched, and feeling like I was closer to understanding who God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are.

Element was so quick to have us live and know the Gospel by getting connected with the Church and everything they had to offer. I have made some extraordinary relationships through the women’s bible study, family events (all ages), Sunday service, and

other yearly events they put on. I am also in the military and have used the audio recordings from service on the website.

Today I feel closer than ever to God and I know there is more to learn and practice. When my eyes are open and I seek Him first I see and feel He is always there, and no matter what, He is good. I am held and He is sovereign. In Jesus I have a place. I’m not sure exactly when I came to know Him (date wise), but I can say that I know that He has always been drawing me to Himself. I was the one that was pulling away.

Some days, even now, I continue to get my focus on myself instead of Him, but I know He is faithful no matter what. I am forever grateful He never gave up on me and I will continue to serve Jesus even when things get a bit shaky. He set me free, gives me direction daily, reassures me, makes me want to surrender more of myself daily, and creates a desire to want to share His love to others because of what He has done for all of us.

This story, my story, is not over. He continues to teach me to take that mask of happiness of perfection off because we need connection. I will continue to live His story by taking chances, talking about what He has done and continues to do, continue to learn, and grow deeper in relationship with God. I will be present around new and old friends/family by having faith and hope in what He continues to give us, which is freedom and rest.

Thank you for joining me today in baptism as we all get to celebrate what Jesus continues to do in us.

SUNNY LALONDE

Hi! My name is Sunny Rae LaLonde, and I am 27 years old. I was born in SLO and raised in Morro Bay, and this is my story.

I did not grow up involved in the church. I grew up in a family of believers, but being involved in the church was not something my family really had any interest in. I remember going to services with friends growing up or my grandmother here and there, and I always enjoyed learning about the Gospel.

Growing up, I was extremely close with my father, even in young adulthood. I was a daddy's girl. He was everything a father should be: protective, caring, a provider, a great listener and most importantly a best friend. He taught me everything I know and has shaped me into the woman I am today. At the end of 2014 my dad had a very unexpected stroke which put him in Cottage Hospital for a couple weeks. I spent every day and almost every night down there with him, sleeping in my car in a parking structure some nights just so I could be close to him. While recovering from his stroke he suffered a major heart attack and passed away which is when my world fell apart.

At just 20 years old I found myself lost, depressed and without any hope of things getting any better. I had a mother who had turned into a mean alcoholic and no other family around, I had no support system. I was on my own. I had fallen into a very dark place for a long time. I was not the woman that I wanted to be, I hardly recognized myself anymore. Looking back on these moments, I realize that Jesus was always in the back of my mind urging me to keep going as if He was saying "just take it one day at a time, you can do it."

It wasn't until the beginning of 2021 where I felt a constant urge for me to reach out to Jesus. I had been feeling alone and sad and felt myself sinking right back into that dark place that was so familiar to me. I then found Element. The very first Element service that I streamed online was one about loneliness and how embracing Jesus in one's life would mean that one is never truly alone. At Element there is an emphasis on the importance of coming together as a community to share our love for the Lord. It was an amazing service, one that had spoken to me beyond what I ever could have imagined and left me bawling my eyes out. I have been attending services at Element ever since. I have gained a great amount of peace knowing that Jesus is by my side in the good and the bad times. I also realize that when I thought Jesus was saying, "just take it one day at a time, you can do it," it was actually that I do not need "to do it" (life) on my own. That He is the one who is able to rescue me from my despair and loneliness.

I am so thrilled to be able to celebrate a new life in Christ and to commit to Jesus publicly with Element. It is such a powerful symbol of what Jesus sacrificed for all of us. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Peter Acts 2:38

ETHAN BETTY

Hello, my name is Ethan Betty, I'm 23 years old, and I was born and raised in Santa Maria my whole life. To start off, my family used to go to church when I was young, and I was baptized as a baby. I was too young to understand the meaning of being baptized, as I have grown older and learned more, I now understand the significance.

Throughout most of my life I didn't attend church services. My family stopped going and were not practicing their faith at all. I in turn wasn't reading my Bible and I even stopped praying.

My childhood wasn't necessarily the greatest, my mom was a single mother and struggled with heavy addictions as she raised me. In the end I mostly had to raise myself as she was too far gone with her addictions. I also grew up not having a relationship with my dad and have never met him to this day.

When I was in my teenage years, I ended up moving in with my uncle and his girlfriend at the time. The same thing took place with them where I saw a repeated pattern of watching their addiction take over their lives. If you haven't guessed, my family is prone to addiction, and I have struggled with it as well.

When I turned 18, I finally moved out on my own and eventually started dating the young woman who would become my wife, Kiana. She and her family helped me to see the reality of who Jesus is and get back into attending church services.

Currently, I now read my Bible daily, I am developing a deeper relationship with Jesus by walking with Him, I am understanding better how to live life as a Christian Man should live, and by grace I have beaten my struggle with addiction. Over the last few years,

I surrendered more and more of my life to the grace of Jesus and His rescue of me; in doing so I have become a nicer and happier person.

I want to first thank Jesus for saving me, but I also want to give many thanks to my wife and her family for helping me understand what real faith looks like. I also want to thank other family friends as my life has been so much better ever since my relationship with God has blossomed. God has blessed me and it's cool to see what He has done even when I wasn't looking for Him in my childhood and walked away from Him.

He has always been watching over me and guiding me on His plan which leads me to be baptized today. I will be forever grateful to Him and I am super excited and ready to be baptized as this is a huge step in faith for me. Baptism is a reminder of the strength my faith has brought about in my life. In His grace I am becoming who God always meant for me to be, a child of His and an image bearer of Jesus in the world.