

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 1, 2013



ELEMENT
christian church

SYDNEY BROWN

Hi! My name is Sydney, and I am 17 years old. I was born and raised here in Santa Maria, CA and have loved every minute of it. I started attending Element when it first opened several years ago. I loved it because Aaron, all the leadership, and all the members always made me feel welcome and comfortable.

I grew up in a large Christian family and always felt loved and supported. I have never had a traumatic event in my life or remember a specific time that I decided to seek God. On the other hand, He has always been a part of my childhood and family life, and He has been seeking me.

My parents forced me to go to church every week, sent me to Sunday School, church camps, and Christian school. I learned all of the "information" about Jesus, but didn't fully comprehend the true meaning of being a Christian. I acted perfect at church, in school, and at home, but didn't really live my life focused on God.

As I grew older, I thought more about Christ, but wanted the decision to follow Him to be MY decision and NOT my parents. It was important that my decision be my own based on my relationship with Him, and not because anyone was pressuring me.

Over time all the Biblical lessons that I learned from my family, camp, school, and Sunday School began to make sense in a way that I could understand. Instead of just knowing the facts in my head, I now believe it in my heart. I can see the meaning behind the Bible stories and try to apply them to my everyday life.

Since surrendering to Jesus, accepting Christ into my heart, I feel more peace. I appreciate more things and take less for granted. I feel like I have a purpose on this earth and a better understanding of that purpose as a Christian. I am really excited to follow God's plan for me.

RUDY VAN SOLINGE

My name is Rudy van Solinge. I am 59 years old and surrendered my life to Jesus as my Savior on December 23, 2011. It took a while for me to "come to Jesus," but I know that God has been active in my life all along. My spirituality has been a bit of a puzzle and finding Jesus (or Him finding me) was the last piece. He changed my life so I could approach life Christ-centered instead of me trying to be in control all the time. This is my story.

I grew up in a very close but secular family. My father was a strong personality and was an agnostic. Even though he was an agnostic he was still active in the church in Holland before the family immigrated to the USA. His heart became hardened to God when my sister died from a tragic accident at four years old (I was three at the time). He remained hardened to God till the day of his death. The elders in his church blamed my parents for my sister's death. They said it was their lack of church attendance that God brought about the tragedy. My mother was a loving wife and acknowledged and supported my father's views about religion. She believes in God and Jesus, but I'm not sure as to her true commitment.

My parents came as immigrants to the US for new opportunities and a better life for their sons. My dad worked incredibly hard and established his own business; he was successful in very short amount of time. His work ethic was passed on to me as I lived my life's journey in going to school, sports, marriage and my career. I have been very blessed in finding a loving supportive wife of 34 years, having 2 good kids, running a business, and a beautiful home.

For most of my life, I was an agnostic like my father, with a belief in God (and that Jesus was a great guy) but could not get my arms around the fact that He was the "only guy." We went to church once a year at Christmas, but it was an event for the kids and felt a bit hypocritical about it. I led a moral life, although a self centered one, I even put my

RUDY VAN SOLINGE [CONT]

kids in Christian school so they could make their own decision as to their faith.

But, and this is a big but, I always felt that there was more to life and searched for spirituality in modern new age thinking. For me that meant that you experience what you believe and that you are the source of all thought and you create the reality of your beliefs.

I was happy. Why would I want to change? In the fall of 2011, I was watching an interview on TV of an author, Richard M. Eyre, who wrote a book "The Three Deceivers". It really piqued my interest, so I ordered it. I remember to this day sitting in the car in the rain at a horse event of my daughters, and I was immersed in this book. He explained his view of the three deceivers; control, ownership, and independence. The idea was that we all want to aspire to have a high level of all three, but who really has control? Who really owns all? Who really created us to be interdependent with all around us? GOD!

A dear friend of my wife, Kitty, had given us Rick Warren's book "The Purpose Driven Life" which I had started reading. On Dec 23rd, I was reading chapter 7, The Reason For Everything. I read the following paragraph;

"Right now, God is inviting you to live for His glory by fulfilling the purpose He made for you. It's really the only way to live. Everything else is just existing. Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ. If you are not sure you have done this, all you have to do is receive and believe. The bible promises, "To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." Will you accept God's offer?

I became very emotional and started crying. I had reached the pivot point of my life. God had been calling me, so I surrendered. I received and I believed and Jesus Christ came into my life as my Lord and Savior. I called Kitty and confessed my commitment to Jesus.

The search for a church then started, the first being Kitty's in Pismo (that's a drive). A friend of ours had told us about Element, so on January 14th, we visited. That Sunday was the first Sunday of the first sermon of the Genesis series and I knew I was in the right place. Genesis is that book of beginnings, and I think maybe God's plan for me was to start in the beginning. I took communion as an affirmation of God's work in me and the start of my Christian life.

He put me in kindergarten at Element to begin to learn about the word of God, about Jesus and the Holy Spirit, about the Bible, and the role of a church in a person's life. I still struggle every day. Becoming a Christian was one of the hardest things I have ever done. But there is hope, even for knuckleheads like me.

ANDREW LINDBERG

My name is Andrew Lindberg, and I am 21 years old. I grew up going to church and had very Godly parents. With that said, I believed in Jesus and “accepted” the Lord at a young age.

As a child my parents sheltered my siblings and I from a lot of the world because they didn’t want us to get hurt or get into trouble. We lived in a very small town on 6 acres, and we were also home schooled (so on the other end there wasn’t really much for us to do to get into major trouble).

When I was 13 years old, my family moved up to Corpus Christi, Texas. The move was very hard on me because I had grown up in the same house with the same friends going to the same church, and had family all around for 13 years; now all of that changed. I had no family or friends. We lived in a new house and were looking at new churches (and a new home school group). So, when I finally hit 14 I started to hang out with a bad group of people.

Fast-forward a year to the summer 2007. I was 15, and my youth group went to Youth for the Nations (YFN) in Dallas, TX. That summer my life took an entire 180. I rededicated my life to Jesus and everything turned around. A couple months later, in November, I even met the woman who would eventually become my wife.

When I was 19, my girlfriend and I had been dating her for a couple years, and I broke up with her. It was a lot of things; I missed my family and friends in California so I moved back, but really I just wanted to do my own thing and wanted to be on my own. I started trying to find out what my parents were trying to protect me from in this big world.

Needless to say, I did a lot of stupid things in that time that I really would rather not go into detail; it was just stupid (my life at that time could have been a Stupid Summer topic).

Then, last summer, my parents had just moved back to California, and I moved back in with them. There was a lot of conviction by God’s Spirit at the time in my heart, and Jesus moved everything in my life to get me back to where I needed to be.

I got back in contact with my girlfriend, who was amazing, we got back together, and she moved to California so we could be together. In December, we moved to the Orcutt area. On May 25, we got married, and she became my wife.

We tried SEVERAL different churches trying to find a place that felt like home until we came to Element, and everything simply clicked with us.

I feel like God wants me to FINALLY get baptized. So, here it goes!

CHRISTOPHER LOVE

Hello. My name is Christopher Love, and I am 28. As part of being baptized we are asked to share our stories with you. Mine is long one of trying to follow God, turning my back on Him, trying to pursue something to ease my soul, and finally giving up and trusting Jesus with everything in my life.

I was born in Kimmerer, WY April 4, 1985. I am the oldest of 6 children. My family, in part, all have different views about how to live life, they all walk a bit differently, but for myself, I've fought had a rough and troubled past from addiction to complete idiocy. To be honest, I've always attended "church" off and on growing up, but for some reason or another, I always seem to find myself running away from Jesus. In layman's terms, I was just scared.

A few years ago I decided to take a sixteen-month course with seminars with Bill Gothard and Jim Sammons, in the middle of it I thought I'd found my calling. At the end of the seminars, the advanced seminar, it focused solely on money and tithing, I couldn't grasp the concept of why the most important part of the course concentrated on money. At that moment I closed my book and my heart to God, it was February 12, 2009.

When I say I closed my heart, it didn't stop God from coming after me. On June 2, 2013 I attended Element with the woman I love and our family, it is like the lights started to come on. I finally felt at home and an "ease" started to settle in. My heart that was so hardhearted began to change and I realized that faith in Jesus was missing for too long in my life. Yes, I had my family, friends, and loved ones, but I didn't have Jesus or the relationship I really wanted to have with Him. There were times in my life that I still "gave" Him things, but as soon as I did I immediately wanted them back (yes, I know that's not how He works). So with my own yearning, the love and support of my family and friends, but most importantly the faithfulness of Jesus in seeking me, my heart

is now surrendered to Jesus and His good news (the Gospel). I'll never be able to thank them, or Jesus, enough for their support and patience with me during my trials and tribulation.

Today I want to be a better person in my life. I want my relationship with Jesus to be built more and more on a daily basis. I am committing all I am to the change that God is bringing about in me. I have become more focused on God's word and have gone from a constant negative to a world of possibilities and hope.

To all my family and friends, I love you very much and look forward to this new chapter in my life with you. Thanks for reading my story and God bless.

DAVID LOPEZ

My name is David Lopez. I am Sixteen years old, and I was born in Santa Maria.

Before coming to Element, my family would attend mass at many different Catholic churches, however, I never really enjoyed Catholic churches. My brother and I would actually try to avoid attending mass by pretending to sleep, but, of course, my parents wouldn't fall for our acting (and for this I blame my brother).

I have to say that my brother and my attitude towards "church" did eventually change when being introduced to Element during my eighth grade year. My family was invited to Element by my aunt who would boast about how awesome it was, but to my brother and I it was just another place we had to spend our Sunday morning. Boy, was I wrong!

The next Sunday when my family walked into Element, I immediately felt a difference. I felt this rush of liveliness and joy; whether it came from the great music, kind people, corny jokes, or well interpreted service, I couldn't really say. Since then, I have learned to believe in Jesus and surrender my life to Him as my Savior because, after all, He died for me and chose me to be a Christian.

Now, every day, I take into consideration what I have learned at Element about Jesus, what the Holy Spirit has taught me, and try to be as righteous as I can while understanding that righteousness was given to me Jesus. Thus, this great experience of following God has given me a new positive attitude toward everything that God has blessed my family with. It has also opened my eyes to how I am supposed to live my life for God.

Today, I will make a public statement of faith and commit to walk in the way Jesus intends by getting baptized with my brother, Rickey DeLaPaz, so that together we may inspire others to follow Jesus and be saved.

RICKEY DELAPAZ

My name is Rickey DeLaPaz. I am fourteen years old and I was born in Santa Maria. I began going to Element when my aunt invited my family and me.

I have always been a shy kind of person and usually keep to myself. I have never really known anyone to turn to when I needed help, and I was always scared of being alone...until Jesus saved me.

Since trusting, believing, and accepting Jesus as my Savior, the way I see life has changed. I now make better choices. He has led me into a brand new relationship with God and with my family. He has helped me learn how to forgive others, no matter how bad it is. I have surrendered my life and decided to follow Jesus because I have seen how He changed others in a good way and I wanted Him to change my life as well.

Now, I am more helpful to my parents and my family. I love to help others a lot more with their problems. I don't keep things from my parents like I use to. I am a much nicer person than I was before. I know that Jesus is God and He will always be with me and I never have to be alone because Jesus will always be with me.

SANDRA VAUGHN

Hi my name is Sandra (Sandi) Vaughn. I was born on December 17, 1979, in Gilroy, CA. I grew up mostly with my parents, Armando & Elizabeth Vela, and two of my sisters.

I grew up in a very dysfunctional home filled with hate, misery, physical, mental & emotional abuse, and very strict religious practices. As a young girl I remember yearning to KNOW God, to FEEL His presence in my life. I could not understand how this “god” I had learned about could allow me to undergo so much in my young life. I did not understand how “godly people” could be so un-godly, and I fell (or walked) away from religion and faith completely.

By the time I was 23 years old, I was a mother of three beautiful boys. I had also experienced the passing of my middle son, a failed marriage, cancer, sexual abuse, depression, suicide attempts and drug addiction. It was then that I found (or more specifically, He found me) a loving, kind, graceful, forgiving God. The God I had so longed for my entire life.

A lot of people have different experiences with Salvation, but I remember the day I literally cried out to God. I remember my eyes were closed, and I saw and felt two big beautiful angels wings wrap around me. I felt as if I was being rocked like a baby. I felt God’s Holy Spirit say “It’s going to be ok. I am here now, and I have always been. I have been waiting for my little girl.” From that moment on I began to KNOW God and all His goodness.

From then on I continued to learn God’s truths and the reality of the Bible’s teachings, and I fell in love with my Savior. I found peace deep inside with every tragedy I endured; Jesus was able to turn my pain into strength and the will to continue living. Jesus converted my hatred and blame into love and forgiveness.

Today, I am extremely blessed. No matter what trials or negativity come my way, I can now see it with loving graceful eyes. Today, instead of being the “victim” I can be the victor with God’s love and grace. I can take every moment of my life and be thankful.

I have wanted to get baptized for some time, but until now I never felt truly ready to take off the old and put on the NEW me publically. Now, I want everyone to see the ME that God always intended me to be.

I want to be the greatest example to my sons that I possibly can be. I want to be a light to others who have possibly been through similar circumstances. I want the world to see God’s love and grace through me.

I came to Element by invitation of a great friend of mine; I stayed because of the feeling of family and grace here. Thank you for being family and sharing this day with me.

JONATHAN PIERCE

My name is Jonathan Pierce. I was raised in the Catholic Church, with catholic parents. We went to church, Sunday school, and I even went through communion when I was young. As with a lot of people today, my parents divorced, I grew older, and lost interest in going to church and growing in my faith. As a young teenager, I was very independent and didn't have the guidance I needed, or the people around me to support me in seeking to grow my faith.

When I came to my early twenties I made a lot of wrong choices and decisions that ultimately lead to six months in jail. During that period I had a lot of time to think about my life and where I wanted to really be from then on; it was the beginning of the breaking point in my life. As soon as I was released from jail I was determined to live a better life, make better choices, and turn from the way I was living before. I broke all communication with those who had negative influences on my life and started to live differently.

After about one and a half years I became a father to my two beautiful daughters, which motivated me to work even harder and be my best for my daughters as well myself. I was working hard and providing for my two young children, but I came to a low point in my life because I was struggling with the relationship I had with their mother. I believed that she was not being supportive or the mother our children needed her to be. We went our separate ways after struggling in our relationship for several years. At that time, I decided to simply be myself, and I focused on being a good father as well as my faith.

I went back to school and started my current career. Eventually, I met someone who, after all these years, invited me back to church and supported my new interest in faith and God. Our relationship started to build, and I was able to observing her faith and trust in Jesus. It made me want to be closer to God, and also grow our relationship closer, by growing in our faith together. This is when I, on the evening of

June 19th, 2013, prayed and surrendered myself to Christ as my personal Savior and Lord.

Now, I not only know, I feel the ultimate comfort knowing that I am a child of God. My sins are forever forgiven, and I can be the man, father, son, friend, and one day husband I have always wanted to be. I am excited to grow in my relationship with God and have, therefore, decided to take the next step of becoming baptized.

Do you want to be baptized?

**Our next Baptisms will be
in the Spring 2014**

Sign up now!



<http://goo.gl/iZtQr>

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)