

# 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

August 31, 2014



ELEMENT  
christian church

# ERIC BOUZA

My name is Eric Bouza, I am 42 years old. I was born September 11, 1971 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Being from Utah, as you can imagine, I was brought up in a religious family where I went to church every Sunday from the ages of 9-17. Even attending church for 8 years, I never really understood why we went to church; even if I asked it's just where I was told to go.

At the age of 17 I had more unanswered questions than understanding, so I left the church. I still had enough of a foundation from those early years to have a rudimentary understanding of who Jesus was, but I didn't know that I needed, or could even have, a have a personal relationship with him and to put my faith and trust in him.

In my 20's I joined the military, got married, and had two beautiful daughters. As time passed the relationship with my wife deteriorated, and after a messy divorce and custody battle, I attempted suicide for the first time. After I recovered I still continued to live life on my own, doing it my way, which ultimately continued to affect my girls and me in a negative way.

Time went on and after two more failed marriages I found myself alone and attempted suicide two more times. After the last time I attempted suicide, as I lay recovering, I felt God telling me that He had a plan for my life. I believe He told me that if I were to attempt suicide one more time, He would take me. This brings me to great old age of 31.

At 31 I moved from Colorado back to California to be close to my family, although it meant leaving my girls behind. I knew I had to get my life together in order to one-day get custody of my daughters. Even though I believe God was calling me, I still wasn't leaning on Jesus for help or guidance, which meant I continued to do things on my own.

In 2008, when my girls were 13 and 14, I got full custody of them. For the next four years I tried to be the best role model and father I could be. However, I knew I was always coming up short because I didn't have Christ in my life. In 2012 I met and married my beautiful wife Tracy (although 'met' isn't exactly correct because we had actually known each other and been friends in high school). We had a very rough year and I once again came with in a half hour of being divorced, but we reconciled, saving each other and our marriage.

It was October 2013 that my wife and I knew we needed to make a change and make Christ the center of our lives and our marriage. Tracy grew up at Grace Baptist Church in Santa Maria, but together we decided to find a new church together that could become our home. After our first visit to Element, we knew we had found that church. We feel blessed that we were able to find such a warm, loving church with a pastor like Aaron who convicts us each and every Sunday.

Through attending Element, and learning about what Jesus did for us on the cross, I have committed my life to Him for not just for my own salvation, but also for the sake of my family. I strive everyday to be like Christ and to treat others with the same love He has shown me. That brings me to this day of baptism.

I always thought I had to have it all together before I could be baptized. Aaron taught me that it's not perfection that's needed, it's trusting Jesus (even in my failings) as Jesus' power guides me through this journey. I share my story with you today to tell you all publicly that I love Jesus and I want to live my life for him.

You should too, because Jesus is amazing.

# RYAN SAWYER

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My name is Ryan Sawyer. I am 25 years old and I was born and raised in Indiana.

I didn't grow up in a Christian home, with anything about Christ readily shared; as a matter of fact I didn't even know what the word "Christian" meant growing up. My parents had bad experiences with "religion," which left my mom in a position where she consciously made sure she did not push it on us as kids. There was a time in her life that she had been mistreated by churches and it had soured her to any religious adherence.

My mother did believe in God and Jesus, but she felt that we, as her children, should discover our faith on our own. A hidden, never talked about, faith was simply the way we lived until my mom died on February 23, 2001. After that, everything changed.

My sister was the first in our family to surrender her life to Jesus, but it was a few years after my mother passed; even with that amount of time, I still didn't understand why. She really was the first person in my family to become a Christian and it was incomprehensible to me.

I, personally, always felt disconnected from God and the fact that she surrendered herself to Him so fast made no sense to me.

Time progressed and a lot of things that I would call "suffering" came into my life. Without going into detail, I suffered many things from my father and my "stepmother" even though my dad never married her. Many times I was left alone to where I felt abandoned, the rest of my family would give me sympathy, but would never actually do anything to help. This taught me to rely on myself and to survive on my own. Even the word, "Family," to me always seemed like nothing more than an empty promise.

From the time I was 12 all the way into my 20th year I was consumed with my own hurt. I could only see my life in disarray, emptiness, and filled with loneliness. It was at this time, at a party at an ex-friend's house, I met my future wife and God used her to begin to change my life.

At first we did a lot of things wrong, but one huge "right" was she introduced me to Jesus. She would lay in bed and read the Bible when we would have a fight. As I said before, this made no sense because my family never talked about God. After spending time with God she would look so relieved and I realized I wanted that so bad. Eventually this led me to start to look for churches, I wanted to know more about Jesus.

We went to a handful of churches and none of them clicked with me, all of them had the wrong "feel." I didn't feel connected, or any type of passion, like I knew I should for God and His words until we came to Element. At Element, for the first time, I truly understood Jesus and His love. It was here that I surrendered my life to Jesus just like my sister did so many years ago.

Now I feel a sense of God presence, not just at Element but at all times in my life. My wife and I love this church. Today, my wife and I have been through many ups and downs, but God is with us through it all and He created a love in me for Him and her that I can't properly explain.

Jesus is everything, and I am so grateful he brought my wife into my life to lead me to Him. We both love Element and I wouldn't want to be baptized anywhere else. I want this baptism to happen because I am ready now and I no longer want to wait to serve Him.

# KIANA SAN JOSE

Hi, my name is Kiana San Jose and I am 17 years old.

Before I opened my heart and responded to God's love that was offered to me, I made many dumb mistakes. I'm a teenager and I would get in trouble a lot. When that would happen, I would blame God. I know it sounds dumb, but I would just be so angry and didn't know what to do with that .

Growing up, I went to church every Sunday, but never really understood what Christianity was really about. I could hear people talk about Jesus, what life was meant to be, but it never clicked. On July 27, 2007, my birthday (in more ways than one now), Jesus laid hold of me and I opened my heart, and cold soul, to Him.

For a very long time I felt that I had the "title" of a Christian, but I didn't live it out. As I got older, I started to pray a lot more and read my Bible. Jesus brought me to a place where I now understand more and more that I am a child of God. He has even shown me that the people I don't like are loved by Him, too.

I used to be very fascinated about the devil or paranormal movies, like I was drawn to it. The more I read my Bible, the more I realized I should stay away from things like that because they don't grow me towards my understanding of Jesus. So today I follow His commands as best as I can. I still struggle, stumble, and fall but I know He will, and does, love me no matter what. I want to shine my love for the Lord on people who are in darkness because He has first shined His light on me.

This is one of my favorite scripture verses that I hang on my wall to remind me of the goodness of God:

## **Isaiah 60:30**

*Your sun will never go down, your moon will never fade,  
for The Lord will be your everlasting light.  
Your days of mourning will come to an end.*

## **Do you want to be baptized?**

**Our next Baptisms will be  
Spring, 2015**

*Sign up now!*



**<http://goo.gl/iZtQr>**