

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 6, 2014



ELEMENT
christian church

LESLIE MARTINO

My name is Leslie Ann Martino and I was born in Jose California (I won't tell you the year). When I grew up, in many ways, my family life looked very traditional. We lived on the same street as three of my aunts, uncles and many cousins. Both of my grandparents lived within walking distance of my family. It was that television show life from an earlier era that seemed so ideal in many ways.

My maternal grandma was a key figure in my life; she was the calm in the storm. She was my babysitter while my parents worked and most importantly, she considered herself a Christian. My father's parents, met on a Choctaw reservation and my grandma lived on the reservation as my grandfather was a police officer; they were also both Christians. As with most people, claiming something doesn't *make* you something as my parents did not live a Christian life. The only exposure I had to Christianity was from talking with my grandma, visiting churches, and going to some clubs with friends. I still remember being a (pioneer girl).

Even though everything looked ideal, my life was in turmoil from my earliest memories that were filled with heartache and disappointment. My parents focused on drinking, fighting, and parties. My brother and I were often spanked and belittled, which my parents would follow up with remorse. Needless to say, this thoroughly confused my views on family interaction.

Many times I would pray for help and felt there was no reply as the dysfunction escalated. Eventually my parents were involved in a shooting incident and my brother became violent and drug addicted. I then fell into a roll of trying to be "perfect" to avoid chaos...but eventually I gave up on that as well. Please don't misunderstand me, I "believed" in God, but I felt it was my fault God did not want to help me.

I started drinking, using drugs, and smoking. I eventually became engaged to marry the man who supplied my drugs. One night, after

another night of drugs, I lay on the floor with my heart racing abnormally and I felt God said to me, "stop this or you will die". In tears, I knew God loved me and that I mattered.

I felt a sense of urgency to make changes and give my life to Jesus. As for most people, surrendering to Jesus is not an easy thing to do. I lost my way when I faced infertility. I was focused on what I could not have and experienced depression instead of joy when friends shared news of their expanding families. Eventually I realized I was trying to take total control of my life and focused on what I perceived as a negative outcome. In the end I admitted to God that I had lost hope and prayed for his forgiveness.

Before coming to know Christ, I was an emotional wreck; loneliness and insecurity consumed my life. But when God spoke to me, I realized that I could continue down the wrong path or turn my life around.

Today I have accepted my past and moved on with a life committed and surrendered to Jesus. My faith in God has made a huge difference in my life. I am actually happy and can even trust the fact that God loves me!

Getting baptized is me burying my old life and embracing my new life with a commitment to Jesus Christ because...*God showed his loved for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

ART GEER

Hi, my name is Arthur Geer. I grew up in Missouri. My childhood was traditional. My father and mother both worked very hard. I had three older sisters, but we didn't go to church much, except sometimes at Easter.

Our neighbor would take my youngest sister (Midge) and me to church occasionally. We would go to Sunday school during the summer and we also attended a church camp once or twice. I was baptized when I was around 9 years old, but I don't think I really understood what it meant. I "accepted" Christ as my Savior when I was in High School and God was very important to me during this time. During my junior and senior years in high school I would go to church every week and enjoyed reading the Bible.

When I left home for college I stopped going to church all together. Other things were distracting me: school, girls, and living away from home. It was a slow process, but I stopped thinking about Christ. After college I moved from Missouri to California and started working. I have now been living and working in California for the past 29 years. I married my wife (Jan) in 1989 and have to say my life has been good.

In 2010 my sister Midge passed way, she had been fighting cancer for six years. She was in pain, but she was also thinking more about other people in her life, like me. Before she passed she told me that she wanted me to start reading the Bible again, so I promised her I would.

While reading the New Testament, I could tell I was missing God. Reading the Bible stirred in me a desire to start attending a Bible teaching church. I talked it over with my wife and we visited some of the churches in the area and eventually started coming to Element 2 or 3 years ago.

Soon I began to question if I should be baptized again as I have surrendered my life to Jesus and I know He lives in me. I know He accepts me because He has forgiven me for my sins. God, Jesus, is again very important to my family and me. I want to have Jesus Christ lead me in my life everyday which is why I want to be baptized again. This time I understand it, this time it is about His glory and the joy that He so graciously has given to me.

JAN GEER

Hello everyone, my name is Jan Geer, and I have lived most of my life in Santa Maria. The central coast is where most of my family lives, where I graduated from high school and college, and where I spent most of my career. I have traveled and lived elsewhere as a child and as an adult, but this is home.

My childhood was chaotic. My family did not attend church as a family, pray (out loud) or discuss God or religion (with me). I did go to church (Sunday School and Vacation Bible School) occasionally, but I considered it more a social activity as it was usually with friends. I attempted to get baptized when I was around 10, but for whatever reason, it didn't happen.

As an adult, I have visited churches as a guest of someone, usually for special occasions, but I didn't attend on my own. A few years ago, my husband's sister passed away. During her illness, she encouraged my husband to get more involved with the Bible, so he started reading the Bible everyday. We visited several churches in Santa Maria and chose Element as the one we would like to attend regularly. It may have been the only church that I attended where I enjoyed the service so much that I wasn't looking at the clock to see how long before I would be able to leave. That may not seem like a brilliant endorsement, but it actually is.

I want to be baptized. Actually, I want to have already been baptized. Until recently I haven't questioned what kind of person I am. I know my heart isn't pure and I have a lot more faults (sins?) than I would care to admit. However, I have always assumed that I was one of the good guys, or good enough guys. That is the way I present myself to most people.

I will admit that I can identify with a poem I once read, "Lines from a Christmas Card" which goes like this: "May all my enemies go to Hell. Noel, Noel, Noel." By enemies, I mean evil people who do horrible things

to other people, and sometimes, people who annoy or irritate me for whatever reason. But it is mostly evil people because I usually get over annoyance and irritation sooner or later. (I do have an affinity for revenge related entertainment, movies, books, etc.)

So, with that major "un-Christian" revelation, it is curious why I think that I am ready to get baptized. As one of my favorite revengers, Dirty Harry, says, "A man's got to know his limitations." I know some of mine. I would like to triumph over my anxiety about, and impatience with, the rest of world to the degree that I am not wishing folks to Hell on any regular basis. I think that I am on the right track by even realizing that this is a reasonable goal. It also helps me to realize that I am just like everyone else, broken and sinful at heart. But the beauty is that Jesus saved and loved me anyway.

Our God is rich in mercy and grace and today I want to be baptized as a demonstration that I want to practice being a Christian, and also, a commitment that I will.

SHALENE MARRE

Hello, I am Shalene Marre, and I am a 47 year old married mother of four. In the past, we attended church as well as church group gatherings in our previous hometown of Los Olivos.

As I put this into words, I can honestly say that we went through the motions of living a Christian life. I lived my life trying to be “good enough” and felt the immense failure from it daily because I never felt I was good enough because of my sin, and felt the guilt from it.

I continuously prayed for the ability to “do better” with the expectation that somehow I would wake up and have that ability to be perfect. I know that will never happen and that is why an understanding of Jesus and His grace is so important.

I realize that all I have to do is commit my life, all of my life, including my failures, to Jesus. Trying to live a sin free life was and is exhausting and all consuming. It makes you long for something more than you currently have. I lived that life of always wanting more and it is a cycle you cannot get off without Jesus and His strength. I realized I cannot do this on my own, I needed to be forgiven, and through the death of Jesus, I am.

Making the choice to imitate Him by trusting Him and turning away from sin is much easier than trying to live a perfect life. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is my service to Him, out of a joyful heart, to live a Christian life and proclaim it with baptism.

This I can and will commit the rest of my life to as I live in His grace and strength.

KAYLEA MARRE

Hi, my name is Kaylea Marre and I’m 16 years old. I want to get baptized because I want to unite with Jesus and the church officially.

I grew up knowing God gave me everything. We went to church and my parents taught me that Jesus died for us and forgave our sin. I have always believed in Jesus, but as I got older we went less and less which led to me feeling less and less connected to God.

When I was in junior high my oldest brother took me to church. I realized the things that I had been missing and it made me want to start going again. Attending a church with other believers opened a door to Christ, but I didn’t really get the big picture. A little while later my brother took me to a new church, Element.

I had always heard the phrase “being saved by Jesus,” but I never really understood it. Then at Element I started to understand it. I started reading my bible more and the messages every Sunday honestly made sense. This “Jesus saving me” idea became a reality.

Then I started thinking really selfishly because I really did want to have a real connection with Jesus, but I felt so unworthy. Seriously, God sent his only son to die for me, for His people, and what have we done? Sinned. For a while I felt terrible and it made me avoid church. Then I realized it’s not about me and what I’ve done, it’s all about Jesus and what He did. He died for his people because He was the only righteous person who ever lived. He was God in the flesh come to save me, and I now know I need to focus on that.

He already died for my sins so why should I waste this life he’s given me? I shouldn’t. I should serve Jesus and that’s what I want to do.

JOHN WESLEY MARRE

My name is John Marre, and I am eight years old. I've been attending Element with my mom and dad and sister for a little while (actually they the staff at Element really help me put my words into story form so you could understand it today).

Before my life was surrendered to Jesus I felt scared a lot of the time. I was so scared that I felt alone and my mom couldn't even do anything to help. At Element they are constantly talking about Jesus and I started to realize that He is the one I could trust my life to.

I want to be a good Christian, but I also realize that it is Jesus who makes me good. I really do want to follow Jesus for the rest of my life; I want to be obedient to Jesus with my life.

I am still growing in my relationship with Jesus and I am sure I always will. Today I simply know I am becoming a better and better person by following Him.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story and share this day with me and my family.

ZACHARY BURNHAM

Hi, my name is Zachary Burnham and this is my story of meeting Jesus.

One night I was reading a kids version of Left Behind and the Kids in the book were praying with someone for forgiveness for all their sins. It was interesting because as I was reading those words in the book I thought that I wanted to ask God for forgiveness, so I did.

I know that I am Christian and that I follow Jesus, I even believe that I might (hopefully) sin a little less now as well.

I believe I am different, now that I've surrendered my life and follow Jesus, in that I pray a lot more than I used to and listen to His guiding.

Today I am getting baptized because I want to show that I love Jesus and He loves me. I am sure as I get older I will grow more and more to understand Jesus better, but I know baptism is what He wants me to do now...so here I go.

Thank you for reading my story and for being here today.

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)

Do you want to be baptized?

Our next Baptisms will be
Labor Day Weekend 2014

Sign up now!



<http://goo.gl/iZtQr>