

# 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 19th, 2015



ELEMENT  
christian church

# DANNY MAHER

My name is Danny Maher. I was born in Simi Valley in 1971 and baptized as a Catholic. I have been a believer in Jesus for as long as I can remember and have enjoyed God's influence in my life, but still felt like something was missing, until last year.

I was raised in Orcutt in a pretty normal family, the middle child of three boys, some might say we were boring. Not much drama, just school, sports, friends, etc. As I said, I was raised Catholic and went so far as to take my first communion. At some point, however, my parents decided we didn't need church in our lives any longer, and that was that.

Now fast forward to 1990. I had moved to Santa Rosa to go to school, but God had other plans. I landed a job at a local market/delicatessen where I thought I was hired for my experience in grocery. I found out later I was hired because the manager thought I was cute and would make a great companion for one of the girls who also worked there. It turns out, after nearly 22 years of marriage, she was right, at least about the great companion part anyway.

When my wife and I were preparing for our wedding, we needed a pastor. A friend recommended his, so we met with him, began attending his church and were married shortly thereafter. As time passed, however, we began to see this pastor in a different light. Without getting into detail, we decided to move on. We tried another church on the advice of a friend. We arrived a little late one Sunday morning, and could hear the singing as we approached the church doors. When we walked in, we were quite stunned. There were people dancing in the aisles, arms in the air, some kneeling on the floor, some were crying, some were laughing, it was like nothing we had ever seen, or were prepared for. I'm sure it was amazing for them, but a little advanced for us. We didn't go back.

Although I continued to do some light research into different religions, I had resigned myself to the fact that I really didn't need "church." I had convinced myself that churches only wanted my money,

(ha, MY money), and I could talk to God anywhere. After my kids were born, I wanted them to know God, but again decided we didn't need church. I figured I could tell them about God, and they could decide which religion to follow when they became adults.

It was around 2000 when I began to feel something was missing. It was this strange feeling like I was on the verge of something but didn't know what. In 2002 I entered the CHP academy. I found a friend in another cadet who lived in Atascadero, and began commuting with him to Sacramento every weekend for the next 26 weeks. This was a very difficult time in our lives and I derived my strength from my family. I found he received his from his strong Christian faith. We had some pretty deep religious conversations on our long journeys back and forth in those six months. He recommended The Message bible to me, and I bought it along with a teen bible for my eldest and a one-year children's bible for my youngest. He also introduced me to the band MercyMe whom I grew to thoroughly enjoy. I have always been a fan of all music, even country, and already had a few Christian albums.

Now you may be wondering, is there a point to this? Why does this matter? I'm getting there, stay with me. In fact, I'll skip ahead, because the next 12 years goes along pretty much the same way. Something's still missing. The signs were there, but I failed to pick up on them. At one point, about four years ago, my eldest son said he had heard about this church called Element, and thought we should check it out. Another sign I failed to acknowledge. I told him I wasn't sure about a church in an old car lot with a name like Element, boy was I wrong. I then took a new position at work about two years ago, and it seemed everyone in my office was a believer. They would talk about the Dave Ramsey program, and one gentleman even took to reading aloud out of the book of Psalms during coffee a few days a week. I was becoming curious.

Now part of my job as a Public Information Officer with the CHP is to attend the Mid-State Fair every year and set up a booth where we can

## (DANNY MAHER CONTINUED)

# SASHA MAHER

talk to folks about recruitment, safety programs, answer general traffic related questions, and provide a little security. I was happy last year when I learned MercyMe was going to be at the fair and made sure I was working that night. That evening I was working with my sergeant (also a Christian), and when the concert began, we closed up our booth and headed over. I will never forget it, when we walked into the venue just as they were singing "The Hurt & the Healer." In the middle of the song, the lead singer began preaching about his trials and struggles and how, he became lost for a time, wondering if what he was doing was enough and how could he do more for God. I was hanging on every word. At that moment, with the music playing, the singer preaching, I felt as though Jesus was reaching out to me. I finally got it, it all made sense, it clicked. And I suddenly found myself, in full police uniform, with my Sergeant and hundreds of people standing nearby, wiping tears from my face and the inability to make it stop. I was saved by Jesus, truly saved.

After that night, my wife and I both decided to really live for Jesus in our lives and truly bring Him into our home. We spoke with our eldest son, in the Marine Corps, and learned that he too had surrendered his life to Jesus while in boot camp. It seems Jesus was chasing our whole family down at the same time.

I connected, with a now very good friend, at work who has helped to guide my path. He recommended I find a church, and only one popped into my head. So when my eldest returned home from boot camp, our family found a home at Element and we have been thanking the Lord together ever since.

My name is Sasha Maher. I was born in Oceanside Ca, and was raised in Santa Rosa. Some of my earliest memories of childhood are centered on going to church. So to say that I was raised in the church would be an accurate statement, but I can honestly say, now as an adult, I didn't ever seem to understand why we went.

I thought I knew who God was and that Jesus had "died for our sins," but when I was 17 years old, my youth pastor asked our youth group to explain just why we celebrated Easter. I was absolutely stumped. After all those years going to church, I discovered I knew very little about the Bible or about Jesus. To say I was embarrassed would be an understatement.

In 1990 I met Danny, who quickly became my very best friend and my husband only year and a half later. We were the first of our friends to get married and, for quite a few years, the only couple we knew having children. In 1996 we welcomed our first son Jonah and in 2000, we welcomed our second son Jakob. These two are the light of our lives. The Lord truly blessed us with amazing children.

We told our children about God, taught them right from wrong, but never made "church" a priority in our lives. We just felt that we could teach them ourselves and pray at home and that would be perfectly ok. Although it may not have been the best decision, I no longer regret it because I know now God had had a plan for us all along; He wanted us to come to Him when it was His time, and our time...AND what a GLORIOUS time it is!

I will forever remember listening to our oldest son Jonah say he had accepted The Lord Jesus Christ as his savior. It brings tears to my eyes even now remembering that phone call. That was the moment all our hearts were waiting for, the place Jesus was leading us all to. I was telling our Gospel Community (our amazingly wonderful, awesome GC) how we had always led a happy loving life, but it's just somehow

## (SASHA MAHER CONTINUED)

different now. Better. At the time I couldn't put it into words, but then Chris Reis said, "The difference is, before you were happy, now you have joy." That is precisely what we have now. And it is awesome.

Now we know who God is, now we know what it means that Jesus died for our sins and also raised up to new life from the grave. We know that church is people living with and for Jesus, and I can tell you what Easter is all about.

## ELIJAH CARPENTER

My name is Elijah Carpenter, I am 10 years old and I was born in Camarillo, Ca.

Our first time at Element was a Christmas eve service and my parents loved the way Aaron taught. God invited us to make Element our home after that night.

Before Jesus, I cared about being cool and popular. I was mean to my brothers and sister, I wanted to dress a certain way, and I only thought about myself. My parents love Jesus, they talk about Him ALL THE TIME, but sometimes it sounds more like words than reality.

After seeing my sister and brother get baptized I saw the change in their hearts and I believe Jesus chose to save me. My dad got sick, really sick, over a year ago and I see how my parents handle that struggle because of how they love Jesus, but also how He loves them. I believe in Jesus, I love Him, I want to love Him more than anything, but that is still hard. I am thankful that He loves me.

My mom says she sees a difference in me, I hope so, I am a crazy boy... but I really do love Jesus too.

# MAGGIE DENTON

My name is Maggie Denton and I am 8 years old. I have been going to Element as long I can remember. I want to be baptized because I believe in Jesus and I am part of God's family. I know, being part of His family, that I can trust Him with anything.

Jesus is the one who makes me good, but I also want to be a 'good' Christian and read the Bible more and pray. I also want to help people and share my church and Jesus with my family and friends. I know that God is right next to me always.

Whenever I feel sad or have a problem I know that I can pray about it and Jesus will hear me. I also just like to talk to him about what is going on.

When I get older I want to help not just my own family but everybody. Being at Element has taught me about the Bible and Jesus. I love going to Element, it has taught me so much about being a Christian and how much I need Him in my life.

# JOHN KLUG

My name is John Klug and I was born in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. I am 46 years of age. What brought me to Element...Jesus.

As with any story the events are much more detailed and longer than I can go into here, but if you would like to talk to me, especially if you are struggling, I would be more than happy to share with you how Jesus has changed and freed me in greater depth. I would love to pray for you and how He can do the same in your life.

When I was young I lived with my Mom, Dad and little brother. From what I can remember my grandparents were religious, going to church on Sundays. I went to Parochial school during some of my elementary years, that's where I first heard the message of Jesus.

I, like many other children, was baptized as a baby. My father died when I was 5 and after that we moved around quite a bit. I always 'believed' in God. I believed He was good, that He was with me and God wanted what was best for me.

As I entered into my teen years I started to make some very poor decisions. Like a lot of people who grow up in a semi-religious setting I knew the difference between right and wrong, but chose to not listen to God's direction or conviction. Worse yet, it wasn't that I was simply ignoring God, I was living in my own will purposely doing things I knew He did not approve of. I lived selfishly, as a matter of fact, at that time it was all about me. I knew beyond any doubt that I wasn't allowing God into my heart or my life.

During this time I also fell prey to, and dealt with, addiction. As years went by I fathered 4 boys, owned a business, and was married and divorced.

What happened? How am I here today being baptized? What Changed? Jesus grabbed hold of me and brought me back to Him.

## (JOHN KLUG CONTINUED)

# TRENTON KLUG

My life was out of control and the only way any it has any semblance of meaning today is that God showed me I did not have to live it alone; I didn't have to struggle and fight with my addiction alone.

Today I have surrendered my life to Jesus. He has come into my heart and soul. Whenever I face a struggle, I know that I can turn my will and my life to God. Now I am finally living on and in God's will and not my own. It can still be a struggle at times, however, the more I surrender and allow Jesus into my life, the easier it is glorify Him and follow His word.

My name is Trenton and I am 7 years old. I have been a part of the eKids ministry since 2012.

Before I started going to Element with my Dad, Grandma, and Grandpa, I didn't know much about God...or Jesus. I had, in the back of my mind, that God loved me and looked out for me, but I didn't know what that really meant.

After coming on a weekly basis, learning more about who Jesus is, He has now changed my life. I love learning about God and His teachings. Now that I follow Jesus, I know more about Him and the way He wishes me to live my life. I am more loving and forgiving to my family today than before.

I am very thankful for the family that God has given us! I enjoy being a part of Element and I look forward to going every week.

# TRACIE LINDSEY

My name is Tracie Lindsey and I was born in Washington C. H., OHIO and I am 45 years old. I am the mother of a beautiful 11 year old daughter and I am one of 6 siblings. When I was a child religion wasn't present in our home, but there was a family that lived near us that would take my brother and I to Sunday school every week, and many church related activities. The time spent with the church was a peaceful part of my childhood that made me feel safe.

I went through most of my adult life feeling lost inside, I didn't have peace and I knew that this wasn't how life was meant to be experienced, that there had to be a way to feel the peace I once did. I eventually started working for a very wonderful lady that lived her life by following Jesus' will. She had been through a lot of severe medical issues and yet always had a beautiful spirit about her. She would talk with me about God and read the scriptures with me. She was unable to attend church on a regular basis due to health issues, but she said Jesus was in her heart, her mind, and her spirit. She would often have me pray with her and she would pray for me.

After spending all of this time with her I began to understand that following Jesus, living by his will, was the true peace my heart was longing and searching for.

I met a member of Element who invited my daughter and I to attend church services with him. The day I went I was unsure if this was the road for me, but after my first service there I didn't simply realize that this was the exact road for me, I realized I finally felt the peace of God as well as His love and acceptance.

I have been attending service at Element for several months now, surrendering bits and pieces of my life along the way. Jesus is the one who has saved me, I understand that now, and though my salvation is by grace I am also trying my hardest to live by God's will.

# KAITLYN RODRIGUEZ

My name is Kaitlyn and I am 11 years old. My mom and I have been coming to Element for the past year.

Before I started following Jesus I had heard people talk of Him, or about Him, and God, but I was really unsure of what value He had on my life or future. I started attending eKids on a weekly basis when my mother attended church services, and I started to learn about who He is. Eventually Jesus showed me that following Him is the right way to live my life.

I understand that following Jesus with my life surrendered to Him will not only make me a better person for my family and for my life, but also for Jesus (and His kingdom). To Glorify Him is the way I wish to live every day, I want to be kind and loving to everyone because Jesus was kind and loving to me.

I love being part of Element, I look forward to attending every week, and I also am very excited about being baptized today.

# MAIRA MACEDO

My name is Maira Macedo and I am 15 years old.

I've grown up in Santa Maria and am blessed to have the family that I do, however, my dad walked out on us when I was young. This of course affected us in many ways. Starting in 5th grade, I began dealing with depression and eventually anger controlled my life. There were days I couldn't cope and wouldn't get out of bed at all. The anger and depression grew so deep that by the time I arrived at the eighth grade I had reach the darkest point possible: I was suicidal. I simply wanted to end my misery and pain, I figured ending my life was the easiest way to make that happen.

I believed I had nothing to live for and nothing to look forward to, my whole family life was turned upside down when my dad left. Thankfully my wonderful Aunt and Uncle, Bea & Jason never stopped reaching out to me. They have always been a part of my life, loving me, welcoming me as part of their own. They would always talk to me about what was going on in my life, they showed genuine concern because they truly cared. I knew they prayed for me. They'd talk about Jesus and what He had done in their lives and in their family. They invited me to church and I started to go with them.

Up to this point, I would say Jesus was always there, but I didn't know Him. Going to church services, hearing what an amazing God He is, caused me to start praying and talking to Him. Then I went to Teen Search over Thanksgiving Break, which is a camp like Young Life. It was there where God truly revealed Himself to me, and the verse:

**Proverbs 3:5-6:**

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.”

All I had to do was to trust Him with all my heart and acknowledge Him, and He will make my paths straight.

So now I try to love Him as He first loved me. I try to attend church services every Sunday, be with my family for the holidays, and pray every night before bed. I know this isn't my doing, but I desire to be closer to Jesus, so He will make my path straight. And He has done some amazing things! I am no longer depressed or angry! I for sure no longer have suicidal temptations (Praise God)! These were not quick changes in my life, but came over time. Him straightening my path, always leading me to Him.

Today I am a much more positive and happy person. I am outgoing and not nearly as angry as much. I want to help others who are dealing with what I have because I have been in that hole and don't want others to live there. I try to share my experience and what Jesus has done in my life. I even live the love of Jesus with my immediate family and will continue to, even though it hasn't been received...yet.

I am thankful for my Aunt and Uncle who have brought me to Element, and our Gospel Community who are going to help baptize me! I've wanted to be baptized for a while now, and am thankful for the opportunity to acknowledge Him publicly through baptism today, with all my friends.

# 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,  
September 6, 2015

*Sign up now!*



<http://goo.gl/iZtQr>