

LIVING IN
GOD'S STORY

LIVING IN GOD'S STORY WITH JESUS AS KING OVER EVERYTHING

We live in the story of God redeeming and restoring His broken creation and inviting His people to be a **family of missionary servants**. Every man, woman, and child can have a daily encounter with Jesus Christ.

FAMILY

All throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus invites people across all social and economic spheres to embrace the Christian community as their new family. **Everybody is invited to His table.**

MISSIONARY

We are called to re-image (or reimagine) our identity as a missionary. **The Kingdom of Jesus has come to permeate every neighborhood, every home, and every person.** As Abraham Kuyper said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

SERVANTS

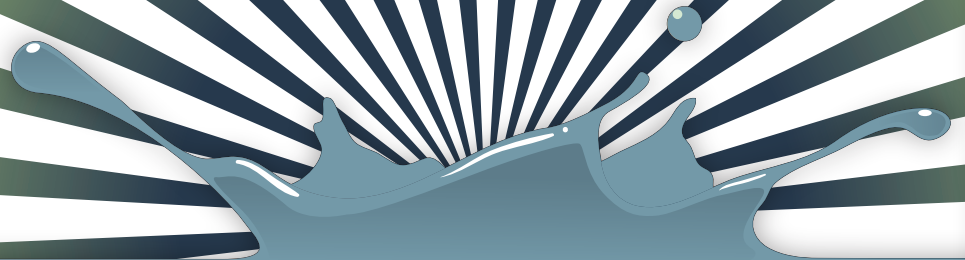
Jesus embodies what it means to be a servant. In a consumeristic society where individual needs always come first, the identity of a servant is counter-cultural and revolutionary. We are to live in the posture and practice of a servant.

As a missionary focused family, we serve the "least of these," the lost and lonely. **In our servant identity we embrace a lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus by being His disciples.** We are a family of missionary servants living in the True Story, displaying Jesus for all to see.



OUR STORIES

April 19, 2026



ELEMENT
christian church

INTRODUCTION:

One of the purposes of these baptism booklets is to help people tell their story with Jesus as the hero. He is Lord, God, and Savior, but also brother and friend. As people grow in their relationship with Jesus, they grow in their understanding of who He is. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Jesus tells us the first thing to do with new believers is baptize them. Baptism reminds these new believers that they are now immersed into the family of God. Baptism also tells others of the work that God is now doing in their life; their sins have been buried with Christ in His burial, and they are now rising to walk in new life—just as Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus then tells us to “teach,” because that is the lifelong journey, growing deeper into our knowledge and understanding of how great the Father, Son, and Spirit are.

When people are spiritually reborn, they are essentially infants in the faith. Infants have a different relationship with their father (in some sense) when they are born versus when they are adults. Jesus saves a woman at a well in John 4 and her testimony to her village is, *“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”* As an infant, her understanding is self-focused, which you will see in many baptism stories. My bet, however, is that if you gave that woman at the well a few years of growth, her story would change from, “Come see a man who told me all I ever did” to, “Come *meet* Jesus and let me tell you about what *He* did.”

This introduction to these baptism stories is a reminder that the people getting baptized may not have all their theology “right” (and all of us have room to grow in this), but they have trusted in Jesus as their Savior. They have a desire to grow and know Jesus more and more. We baptize them because that is the first thing Jesus said to do. Our goal after baptism is to teach them all that Jesus said and did. We hope that all of our stories would continue to evolve over time as we grow in Christ. May all we do reflect Jesus’ Lordship, goodness, and power through our words, thoughts, and actions. **May He be the hero of all of our stories.**

Aaron

BARBARA STOTKO

My name is Barbara Stotko and this is my story of what God is doing in my life.

For a long time, I carried wounds from my childhood that shaped how I saw myself. I struggled with feeling unworthy and unsure of who I really was. I believed so many lies about myself that led to choices and actions that only deepened those feelings.

Even when things appeared okay on the outside, there was a heaviness I carried that I didn’t fully understand how to let go of. But Jesus, in His kindness, didn’t leave me there.

Though I had been exposed to Jesus through the Catholic church as a child, I eventually came to see Him as my Heavenly Father. Over time, He began to meet me in those places—gently and patiently. He didn’t bring condemnation; He brought grace...and He didn’t do it in isolation. He placed the right people in my life at the right time. People who reflected His love, spoke truth over me, and walked with me as I started to experience healing in places I didn’t think could be restored.

The biggest transformation has been learning to believe that I am loved by my Heavenly Father, not because of anything I’ve done, but because of who He is.

Healing isn’t linear; it takes faith through prayer and Scripture, surrendering, and forgiveness. There are moments where I have to keep choosing to trust the Lord in the middle of it, but I face it now with a different perspective, knowing He’s where I’ll find peace.

Today I’m choosing to be baptized as my next step as a believer. It’s also a way for me to honor and thank the Lord—not only for what He’s doing in my life, but for the blessings He’s brought through the trials and the growth that’s come from them.

CIERRA DELGADO

I was born as Cierra Nicole Delgado in Goleta, CA. I remember having a great childhood up until that traumatic morning my father passed away. He passed from alcohol poisoning and was found unresponsive in his apartment. When my mom and I went to see him, they were already wheeling him out and covering up his body. I was 4 years old.

My mother since then had struggled connecting with me and I just longed for the love of my parents. As I got older, my mom and I ended up moving a lot and I started getting into trouble. The majority of my school years in elementary, I would get bullied about my weight, so in high school, I was introduced to drugs and I lost the weight. I never really knew how to handle attention from guys and after losing the weight, I would get a lot of it. I ended up in a few abusive relationships but luckily survived. My body and soul have been taking these last couple years to heal and cleanse in God's love and protection.

Two years ago, I was in a really desperate place and realized I needed to stop pushing God away. I decided to follow Jesus after sensing God calling me and showing me He had another purpose for me. Since then, He's been carrying me and transforming me— healing me from my past.

I've had moments where I wished and prayed for God to take me home to His Kingdom in heaven. I've found today that I've been missing self-love and a sense of belonging. I am grateful today for my life because I know I have been renewed by Jesus Christ. All of my pain, sorrow, and worries are in His hands. I am surrounded by His grace and that little girl inside of me is finally feeling loved enough to be able to live today as a woman, a mother, a daughter, and a productive member of society in Christ.

Baptism for me is a physical action and a personal choice that reminds me I'm not alone in this journey. Taking these steps has been outside my comfort zone, but I know Jesus has me.

FRANCISCO AZEVEDO

I have been thinking about getting baptized for a while. Recently I have been growing so much closer with God and now is the time. I'm getting baptized today because I want to show everyone that Jesus is my God and the one I want to follow. I am also getting baptized to show my obedience to Him (since in the Bible it says one should be baptized). Here's my story:

As a kid I didn't grow up religious at all. But when I was in 4th grade, my school teacher asked me if I wanted to go to church. This church is near where I live, in a small town called Casmalia. My sisters and I said yes and we started going to church. Ever since then I have been going to that church... But often I would find the hour there a burden, like... I could be doing something else, something more fun.

The summer before freshman year, during COVID, I had no one, no peers or friends. I would play video games a lot and that's how I met my friend named Jayden Skillern. Jayden's a really good friend that really got me closer with God and showed me Jesus is not a burden. God used Jayden to show me I'm not alone ever. God showed me that following Jesus comes with community. When God put Jayden in my life, I felt less alone and I had another Christian to talk to and with whom to learn more about God. That's when my faith in God started growing.

Other times when I felt alone, I would play basketball a lot- this kept me going. During a basketball game my senior year of high school I jumped for a block and tore my ACL. I was mad and sad. I didn't know who to blame for my injury. Was it all my fault? Did God do this to me? I just wanted to play basketball. My team had a very important game, but Hartland Winter Camp was the same day as that game. Since I was injured I went to Winter Camp instead of the basketball game and it changed my life so much.

God showed me that He's in control, and that, whatever happens, He'll make sure it all works out. God showed me He wanted a relationship with me, not just me following rules. God helped me find a way to look at my injury in a good light. If I hadn't been injured I probably would have chosen basketball over growing closer with God. Also, God's been with me all the way with my surgery and healing. I now know Jesus is my Lord and Savior and will always be.

Since then, God's been growing my relationship with Him more as I help at church and elsewhere with eKids!, youth ministry, and more. Serving on the mission trip to Thailand and as a cabin counselor at Hartland Camp is showing me how to love everyone else and God's been filling my heart more and more, especially as I work with kids. Seeing the church in Thailand and how little they have, but their church is still thriving, especially since more than 90% of Thailand are Buddhist believers. Seeing all these Christian believers, and helping them, God really keeps showing me that He's the one and only Lord and Savior of everyone, even if they're across the world.

JUAN VALDOVINOS

My name is Juan Valdovinos and I am 29 years old. I was born and raised in Santa Maria.

Growing up in Santa Maria was hard. One of my biggest traumas was when I was age 5, I got sexually assaulted. After that, my life started spiraling out of control. I kept my trauma a secret for many years because the person that did it to me, threatened to kill me if I ever told anyone. So, I stayed quiet and kept pushing through life.

I made some bad choices and was in the penal system from age 14 to 17. During this time there was a volunteer who came to preach the Word of Jesus to us. I had never felt His presence before. I felt it then, and I knew Jesus was real. This is where I first believed.

Jesus died for my sins and carried me through the hard times in life. Knowing that He died for me, helped me to understand that if He is able to die for me, I'm able to forgive those that have done me wrong.

I have been able to work through my anger and hatred for what was done to me and learn to forgive. I have felt the presence and power of Jesus as He helped me to heal. I also met my beautiful fiancé who helps me keep on track with her love and support.

When I was 26, I moved to Oregon with my fiancé for a year and then to Texas for a year. I came back to Santa Maria a year and a half ago which has been hard because all my trauma lives here. But then we received a big blessing. My daughter was born 9/26/24.

One day I went to the grocery store for some food and met this awesome person named Matt Cooper. We talked as we waited in the check-out line. Matt invited me to Element Church. I went and discovered that I love attending Sunday service.

In December 2025 I lost one of the closest persons to me. My father died from cancer. I wanted to give up, but I knew he wouldn't want me to, so I kept my mind strong. Thanks to the support from my family and friends at Element, I have been working through the grieving process.

Going through pain and darkness, God showed me His light. His hope. I believe that anybody can get through any struggle in life knowing that you have Jesus by your side, He is there. I can close my eyes and talk to Him, and feel His peace.

Element Church and the people I have met here feed my soul. Sometimes I can get distracted by life, and when I come to Element, I feel alive and recharged. I feel the love of Jesus and am ready to commit to Him in full. I'm ready to do as He wishes with my life.

He is my hero – He has rescued me, and I can't thank anyone but Him.

I look forward to being baptized by my good friend Matt Cooper.

DARRELL NYLUND

Hello, my name is Darrell Nylund. I want to share a little bit about myself and what brought me to get baptized. I grew up in Littleton Colorado and moved to California in 2017. We started to attend Element Christian church shortly after our move here. I grew up with loving Christian parents and was raised in a strong Christian home. I accepted Christ as my savior when I was 15 at a church camp. It was a wonderful experience and I have been a believer ever since. After my acceptance of Christ, my view of life changed in many ways. One key way my life changed is Christ becoming the most important person in my life and not myself, which is not always easy to live, but God is always there to nudge me back into the right direction.

I have always attended church throughout my entire life and that did not change when I married my wife, Laurie. I feel very lucky that I had such strong Christian wife and parents who led me on the path to a solid Christian life. What is the best part of being a Christ follower? The understanding that what happens in this life, good or bad, is not what is important, it is the opportunity to spend eternity with God. That has really changed how I look at the world and how I react to the challenges life can throw at me.

Why I have waited so long to get baptized, I am not sure. I know my parents brought up baptism when I was younger but did not bring it up as I got older. I have felt it was not a requirement for my salvation, but I have always known that we are asked, as Christians, to publicly display our faith in Christ through baptism. Recently I have felt a strong desire to learn more about our God by reading his word, fellowship with other Christians and now I believe baptism is the next step in bringing me much closer to God. Thanks Laurie and Aaron for pushing along as I needed a little encouragement.

ADREAUNA CORLEW

My name is Adreauna Corlew. I am 15 years old. I have three sisters Peyton, Jasmine, and Bloom. Me and my family all started to attend Element when I was around six years old. I have known about Jesus since I was little. In this past year I have really learned what it is like to give your life to Christ. It has taught me that you can't do this alone because when you have faith you need to know Jesus always has you in every moment. And everything that has happened to me and my family this past year has truly shown me what Jesus can do.

Last year my dad got cancer and it really brought me closer to God. It has shown me that God works so many miracles because as I was talking to God every night and not even knowing some of the stuff I would pray about in the future, He already had it covered. That really showed me the true meaning of faith because when you trust Him and fully give your attention to the miracles He can do, your life can seem a lot less stressful. That is why I would like to get baptized because giving God my life and trusting Him with everything in me is the best decision I could ever make. I hope our relationship continues to grow stronger and stronger. I would like to add a Bible verse that means a lot to me ROMANS 8:18 *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*

*NOTE: ADREAUNA WAS BAPTIZED IN A PRIVATE CEREMONY
ON April 12, 2026.*

CELEBRATING JESUS AS OUR HERO

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT JESUS OR BE BAPTIZED?

We would love to connect you with someone who can share more about Jesus and the good news of the Gospel. Our next baptism will be in September 6, 2026.

Let us know or email us at connect@ourelement.org