

# 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

September 6, 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

# AARON WARREN

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I’m Aaron, and I am 11. I love to do archery at any time possible. I love reading and believe that in a world of bookworms you should be a book dragon. I live with my mom, dad, and sister. It’s incredible being part of our church community at Element. My favorite part of being at Element is that everyone knows everyone. It really feels like an awesome, united community. I am really excited about the rest of the school year. I love school projects and have an awesome 6th grade teacher who tells great dad jokes.

I grew up with a church family, so I don’t really know what it’s like to not know about Jesus. I did grow to know Him much better from camp, Gospel communities, and reading the Gospel. I feel closest to God during chapel at camp; I can feel Christ’s presence strongly through the music, the messages, and prayers with other people.

I would like to be baptized today because I feel that it is the perfect time for me to be baptized. I recently moved up from eKids to Reaction and feel like this has given me a deep understanding of Jesus. I want everyone to know that I want to serve the Lord for the rest of my life. I want to talk about Jesus at school and in other places, and possibly be a youth leader in the future. We all need Christ in our lives to save and redeem us. It is hard to explain how wonderful and awesome it is to know that Jesus died for me. He is my savior.

# ASHER GEE

Hello, my name is Asher Gee. I like soccer and play for CCU and turn 9 next month. I want to get baptized because I believe what Jesus says is best. My family started talking about Jesus to me when I was little and I was curious about Him. I like learning about God at Element, too, because you get to be with your friends and celebrate Jesus at the same time.

Jesus is our Savior and took away our sin by dying for us. I love that Jesus is perfect, strong, and forgives us.

I like the story where Jesus tells Simon to not be afraid and that he'll be a fisher of men. I like that Jesus is always with us even when we're afraid. I want to spread Jesus' word and help people know Him.

# ELLIOTT GEE

Hello, my name is Elliott. I turn 9 next month and I really like to play soccer. I want to get baptized because I really learned a lot more about Jesus this year and want to follow Him the rest of my life.

I really like the Bible because it tells me more about Jesus and what happened in His life. Jesus saves people from their sin, heals people, and treats them kindly. One of my favorite things about Jesus is that He died on the cross for us and three days later rose from the dead.

I learned about Jesus with my mom, dad, other family, and church. I really like Element because we get to learn about Jesus in fun ways and in music.

I want to treat people the way I'd like to be treated. If someone's being mean, I can be nice to them. If I hurt someone's feelings, I can apologize. I really love that Jesus forgives me no matter what I do and He still loves me as much as before.

# LUKE WEAKLIM

My name is Luke. I'm 13 years old and I was born in Santa Maria. My mom brought our family to Element when I was about 7 years old and she thinks it's 'tubular' here!

I've known who Jesus and God is in little ways since I was young. Growing up, I tried to be the best person I could. Sometimes I thought I might not be enough. I really wanted to be someone important and valuable when I grow up.

This year at Hartland Summer Camp, Jesus opened my eyes to see what He has already done in my life. God's given me a fortunate family and has protected me from evil and harm. And He helped me see how much more He can do in my life when I surrender to Him. Trusting Jesus has changed my point of view. I see life more positively and see God's goodness in things. Also, my sins have been forgiven! I know that Jesus loves me so much and He helps me know that I am enough. He doesn't really care who you are, He loves you no matter what! I trust that He'll keep protecting me and guiding me in my future.

I want to keep growing in my faith by going to church, reading the Bible, talking with other older Christians and going to youth group more often here at Element so I can see God's plans for my life more clearly. I'm excited to be baptized so that my family and friends and everyone (even the homeless guy down the street) might know that Jesus has saved me!

# TESS JONES

Hi, my name is Tess Jones and I'm 12 years old. I have gone to church my whole life. I kind of just thought it was a thing we do on Sundays and sometimes I didn't like going. When I got to the elementary room and went to Granite Ridge camp I started to understand more. It sank in that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and our salvation is through Him. Once I joined the middle school group I learned even more and felt more connected with Him. It made me more curious about God and want to learn more about Him. At camp I committed my life to Christ and decided I wanted to get baptized so I can show those around me the commitment I made. I look forward to learning even more from Jesus and growing closer to Him for the rest of my life

# HURLEE JONES

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My name is Hurlee Jones, and I have been going to Element Christian Church since I was born. My family has always followed Christ. We pray before dinner, go to church every Sunday, and have always tried to put Jesus at the center of our family. I have always liked coming to church because every time I went, I felt like I learned something new. Growing up, I always knew who Jesus was. I knew that He loved us, that He died for our sins, and that He rose again. I had heard those things many times throughout my life, but for a long time, I don't think I really understood what they meant personally.

That started to change when I went to Hume Lake Winter Camp a couple of years ago. Something changed in my heart during that trip, and I started to understand more clearly what Jesus has done for us and for our sins. On the last night of camp, the pastor gave one of the most beautiful sermons I have ever heard. It really spoke to me. He talked about how we are all sinners, but God sent His one and only Son to die for us on the cross because He loved us so much. I had heard that message so many times before but that night I actually stopped and thought about what it meant. The God of the universe, the God who created everything, loved us enough to send His Son for us, for me. That was when the Gospel started to become more than just something I had heard at church. It became something that I actually understood and cared about.

I feel like my relationship with Jesus continued to grow from there. Around the start of my freshman year of high school I wanted to get to know Jesus more personally. This wasn't one single moment but more of a gradual process that kept snowballing and getting bigger and bigger until I reached a point where I wanted to dedicate myself to Christ. I believe that God has done so much for us. He is the only one who can wash us clean from our sins. He is

our Shepherd, and He is willing to leave the ninety-nine to go after the one lost sheep that needs Him. Jesus dying for our sins, His resurrection, His forgiveness, and His love all mean so much to me. Sometimes I just think about how crazy it is that the God of the universe and everything that has ever existed would care about us that much.

Now, I want to grow even closer to God by really focusing on His Word and learning what the Bible actually says. I am excited and nervous that I will soon be becoming an adult, and I want Jesus to help me mature not just as a person, but also in my relationship with Him. I want to become someone who knows the Word of God and trusts that everything is in God's hands and that He has a plan for me. I know that life will not always be easy, but I trust God's process.

I want to be baptized because I want to publicly show that I have chosen to follow Jesus and dedicate my life to Him. My faith isn't just something I inherited from my family or something I have grown up around. It has become my own relationship with Jesus. I know that I still have a lot to learn and a lot of growing to do, but I want to keep pursuing Him throughout my life. More than anything, I hope my story helps people who don't know Jesus or who don't believe that He would want them to come to Him. I want people to understand that God genuinely loves them. He loves you no matter who you are or what you've done. He wants you with Him, and He wants to have a relationship with you.

My story is still being written, and I know there will be good times, hard times, mistakes, and things I don't understand. But through all of it, I trust that God has a plan. I want to keep growing, keep learning His Word, keep letting Him change me, and keep showing His love to the people around me. Jesus has always been part of my story. With my baptism I am proclaiming my personal decision to follow Him and continue walking with Him wherever He leads me.

# GRADY FLICK

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Hello, I am Grady Flick. I am 18 years old and a graduate of Righetti High School. Before meeting Jesus the most important things in my life were swim and what was I going to eat that day. I never have had anything against Christianity or the people that practice it, but I never could find it in myself to pursue it.

That changed late in my teen years when I made some amazing friends that God placed in my life to bring me closer to Him. When I was 16, I was introduced to MJ Carlson at Raymond Pettit's birthday party. Both of these friends played tremendous roles in my life, from inviting me to church and youth group, gifting me a Bible and a journal, to even personal one-on-one Bible studies.

The Santa Maria Unite Youth Worship Night at U-Pick Blueberries in August 2025 was a major turning point in my life. While worshipping that night, God revealed to me the weight of my personal battles that I had yet to overcome. This was the first night of my life that I truly felt the presence of Jesus in me and the first time I spoke to God from my heart. In my literal pleas for help, during the hardest time of my life, I sat in my car and felt the warmth of Jesus blanket me. Although this was a turning point in my life, it was only the beginning of a long journey. In that moment it was made apparent that I can not do this alone. I realized that the key to life was no worldly thing. If I wanted victory over these battles and saving, I needed to rest my soul in Jesus. So I trusted my life to Jesus.

Since then, God has walked with me to direct my path clearly to the Gospel, stood in front of me to protect me against prowling enemies, and continued to grow my relationships in His community, the church. This Gospel is the account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and my life has mirrored that pattern. I 'lived' a life without Jesus, then I met Him in a dramatic way, and

through that experience I have been born again into a new life with the J-man - freed from my past restraints and struggles.

I am excited to journey through the next steps in my life in the Marine Corps with Jesus by my side. I know He will give me a hand to hold and direct me to be the man He made me to be. I want to be baptized today as a sign to myself and others that I have accepted Jesus in my heart and want to live a life filled with Him.

# RACHAEL PIERCY

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Thank you for the opportunity to share my story and to declare this important step in my faith journey. I was first baptized at sixteen and grew up attending church with my mom, dad, and brother. Those early years laid a foundation of faith and belonging that I have always treasured. As I got older and moved for work, I visited other congregations and for a time drifted away from the steady rhythm of church life.

In 2008 my faith faced one of its greatest challenges when my mother was diagnosed with brain cancer at fifty-six, just as she was preparing for retirement. The doctors gave her twelve to fifteen months. Every day I prayed for a miracle and focused on keeping her hopeful and strong. She fought with courage and dignity, and though she passed after nineteen months, the care and love we shared remain deeply meaningful to me. Her loss, however, shook me. I have wrestled with anger, questions, and a sense of distance from God and I stopped attending church services. While I never entirely stopped believing in God, my faith was fragile and prayer felt difficult. Over time my thoughts kept returning to God, even when I wasn't ready to reach out fully.

Recently, my life took an unexpected and painful turn that brought me to another crossroads. This time I chose to turn toward faith rather than away from it. I began searching for a church that reflected the convictions and compassion I longed for, and in January I discovered Element. After learning about its mission and values I visited on January 4th. From that first service I felt welcomed and sensed that this was a community where I could grow and belong.

Since my first service here, I have felt a gentle but persistent calling to draw closer to Jesus, to rebuild a life of prayer, and to live more fully in the hope and love I once knew. That calling led me to the

decision to recommit my life to Christ and to be baptized publicly as a symbol of that surrender. This baptism is not just a ritual for me but is a renewed beginning and a conscious turning of my heart back to Jesus. Today, I want to express my commitment to continually turning to Him for support and trusting him to guide my life.

I also want to express my intent to serve the church as a full member, to share in the responsibilities and joys of community, service, and spiritual growth. I am grateful for the patience, welcome, and care I have already received here. It means so much to find a spiritual family where I can be honest about my struggles and hopeful about the future.

I am humbled and thankful for this opportunity to take this step. I look forward to walking forward with you, learning, serving, and growing together. I am happy and grateful to be part of this family. I know my mother is looking down on me today, and is very proud of where I am.

# JUNILYN (JUNI) BRADY

My name is Junilyn Brady. I am 34 years old, born and raised in the Philippines, and I moved here in September 2023. I am the eldest of five children. I have known about God for as long as I can remember. Growing up, my family attended church regularly, but as my younger siblings were born, it became difficult for my parents to continue attending. Even so, my mother always taught me to do what is good and pleasing to God.

In 2012, I moved to the capital city of our province to work and attend college. That same year, my mother was diagnosed with cancer and given only six months to live. Five months later, my little sister passed away, and a month after that, my mother passed away too. Losing them changed my life. I had to become a second mother and provider to my younger brothers while also helping care for my old, sick and grieving grandparents and my father. I worked nights at a call center and attended school during the day, constantly praying for God's strength and comfort. Because life became so busy, I stopped going to church regularly. I believed that as long as I was doing good things, that was enough. I thought that was what being a Christian was all about.

After college, I accepted a teaching job in Vietnam in 2018 so I could better support my family. There, I met my husband, Matthew, and found a church where I was eager to grow in my faith. However, when we began asking questions about what we were being taught, we were told that we were rebelling. That experience led me to seek God more deeply and begin reading the Bible for myself. Our church services were held in a hotel conference room, and one Sunday, about 15 Vietnamese police officers came in and stopped our service, telling us that we were not allowed to meet without a permit. While I was still in Vietnam, Matthew, who was already back here, would video call me so I could attend Element Church's services online. In that sense,

I can say that I started attending Element while I was still in Vietnam.

When I moved here in 2023, I began attending Element in person. I immediately felt welcomed, and it felt like I belonged. Through the nurturing community and faithful teaching of God's Word, I began to understand something I had missed for so many years: Christianity is not about earning God's love through good works. It is about His grace. Even now, because of my sin, I sometimes feel guilty and wonder if I am doing enough. But I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for saving me from my sins and reminding me that my salvation does not depend on how much I can do. His grace gives me a peace that surpasses understanding and allows me to live with joy and hope in His promises.

My hope now is to dedicate my life and everything I do to the glory of God. And now, with my little boy, Caleb, I am grateful that he has a church where he can grow to know and love Jesus. I am also grateful that we can grow together in our faith as a family and connect with other believers. I have considered myself a Christian for most of my life, but I was never baptized. Now, through everything God has taught me and brought me through, I desire to take this step—not because I have earned it, but because I am grateful for His grace. Today, I want to publicly declare my faith in Jesus and commit my life to following Him.

# MATTHEW BRADY

My name is Matthew John Brady, and I will be 46 years old this October. As I look back on my life and the journey that brought me to this moment, I can see that God was working in my life long before I fully understood or recognized it.

Growing up, my family was never a family that went to church regularly. My dad drove long-haul trucks for many years, and my mom worked, so Sundays at church simply weren't something we made time for. It wasn't that we didn't believe in God; faith just wasn't something we talked about very much in our home.

For most of my adult life, I considered myself not necessarily a religious person, but believed there was a higher power, although I wasn't always sure what that looked like. I just had a feeling that there was something greater than ourselves, something beyond what we could see and understand, and something to provide purpose. As many young adults do, I found myself searching for what I should be doing and where I should be. Within a few years I moved multiple times to multiple places ranging from Santa Maria to San Diego and a few cities in between. I even spent about six months traveling throughout the United States, visiting some of the most beautiful places this country has to offer. That journey eventually led me overseas to Southeast Asia, where I experienced different cultures, met people from all walks of life, and saw the world in ways I never had before. It was during that time that I met my wife, Junilyn.

When I first met Juni, I knew she was a Christian. But as our relationship grew, I began to see something changing in her. Her faith wasn't simply something she said she believed in. I watched her make Christ the center of her life. I saw the strength, peace, and hope that came from her relationship with God. Watching Juni grow in her faith made me wonder if I could experience that

same sense of wholeness. I had spent much of my life surrounding myself with people, and I was rarely alone. I've heard people say even if you are never alone, you can still feel lonely and for years, I carried an emptiness inside me—a void that I couldn't quite explain and couldn't fill, no matter what I tried.

Eventually, I found myself back in Santa Maria and started attending Element, a church my friends Sarah and Brandon have attended for years and had invited me when I returned from my travels. When baptism was first brought up, I didn't really have a desire to be baptized because I really didn't understand it. In those first couple years, I didn't feel deserving. I knew I had made mistakes. I knew there were things in my life that weren't right. I thought baptism was something you did once you had gotten yourself together and somehow became worthy of it. But through the relationships I've built at Element, through this community, through my relationship with Juni, and most importantly, through my growing relationship with Christ, my understanding began to change me to understand the Gospel in a way I hadn't before. I began to understand the sacrifice Jesus made for me—not because I deserved it, but because He loved me. I realized I would never be truly ready or worthy of such a gift. And that's the point. The gift has already been purchased by the blood of Jesus.

I have come to understand that baptism isn't about declaring that I have no sin in my life or that I have finally become the person I think I should be. It's about acknowledging that I need a Savior. It's about accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior and accepting the grace He freely gives. Ephesians 2:8 reminds us that we are saved by grace through faith. I have come to understand that grace isn't something I can earn. It is something God gives. For me, now, baptism is a public declaration that I believe in Jesus, that I accept His sacrifice, and that I want Christ to be the focus of my life—not

## MATTHEW BRADY CONTINUED...

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just on Sundays or when things are difficult, but every day and in everything I do.

Today, I am choosing to surrender my life to Him. I am choosing to follow Jesus. I am choosing to accept His grace, trust in His sacrifice, and make Him the center of my life. I don't come to baptism because I believe I am perfect. I come because I know I am not. I don't come because I believe I am worthy. I come because Jesus is worthy. And I don't come because I have everything figured out. I come because I finally understand that I don't have to. I am here because I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in what He did for me, and I want my life from this day forward to reflect that faith.

## 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](mailto:connect@ourelement.org)