

# 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.

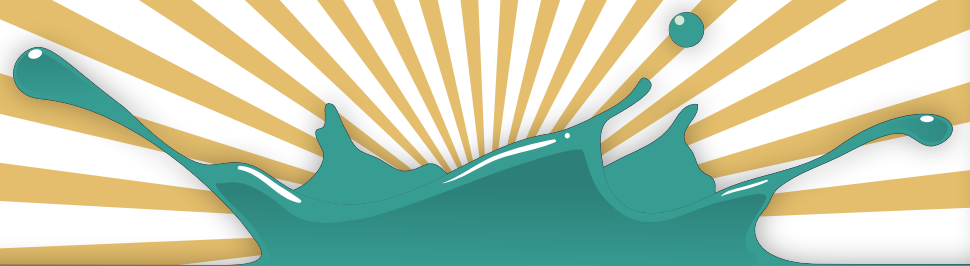
We also have the hope that one day you too will come to the saving knowledge of trusting in Jesus with your life. It makes all the difference in the world.

Aaron



# OUR STORIES

April 23rd, 2023



ELEMENT  
christian church

# ANNIE HEUCHERT

Hi my name is Annie. I am 6 years old. I like Pokemon, math, reading and writing. My favorite color is orange. I live with my mom, my dad, my brother, Simon, and my two kitties, Ben and Minnie. The thing I like about Jesus is everything! He is my Savior and He is always there. I want to tell all of my friends about Him so they can tell their friends and they can tell their friends, so it goes in a circle. I want my friends to know how awesome Jesus is. I feel great about being a member of Element. I get to have lots of fun and learn about Jesus. I know that baptism will not save me. It is a symbol of Jesus. It is a symbol of Him taking our sins away and having a fresh life again.

# EVELYN MCCOOL

Hi! I'm Evelyn McCool, but people call me Evie for short. You say it like "ev-E" NOT "E-V". I am 7 years old and I'm in the 1st grade. In my family there's my mom, my dad, my brother, and my 2 dogs. I LOVE doing gymnastics, building strength, and chillin' with my friends.

Even though I know I haven't understood everything about Jesus my whole life, I love Him now. I think that changed around the time I was in kindergarten. That's when I learned talking to Him gives me courage when I think I'm alone. Knowing that Jesus is always there, and that every move He makes is a good move, helps me trust Him.

I first thought about baptism when I saw my brother get baptized. I hope my baptism will also encourage other people to do it. I want to show other people how much I love and respect Jesus and want to follow Him all my life and that's why I want to be baptized. I want to always try to not take advantage of His forgiveness but instead always be grateful for it. I also want to work on never blaming God when things don't go my way and remembering I can always talk to God.

I love being a part of Element and that Element helps kids and adults learn more about Jesus and how awesome He is.

# JOSHUA BORJAS

My name is Joshua and I am 9 years old. I like to ride my dirt bike and I live with my mom, dad, and two younger brothers. I have loved Jesus since I could understand who He was. I grew up and was raised by many Christians who told me about Jesus and how He came to earth and died on the cross to save us from our sins. He is my Savior. When I'm tempted to do something wrong, Jesus reminds me that I shouldn't. The times that I do sin, I know that He forgives me.

I recently read the story in Acts about Philip and the man from Ethiopia at school. That made me want to get baptized. We also learned about Paul and Silas in prison. Paul and Silas were proud of being Christians no matter what the cost was.

Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

# KAYLENE WARREN

My name is Kaylene Evelyn Warren. I am 10 years old (double digits!). I was born on the Central Coast. My parents are John and Karin Warren, and my brother is Aaron Warren (AKA "Little Aaron"). I have been going to Element since I was born.

Before I started following Jesus, my family was the most important thing to me—and they still are important to me, but the most important thing for me now is sharing God's love with my friends and family. I was around 6 or 7 when I asked Jesus to be in my heart. My mom and dad helped me to see the importance of having Jesus in my life. My grandparents (Mimi and Papa) also helped me understand the truth of Jesus' love. My Sunday School teachers at Element also helped me and taught me so much about God.

I love Jesus because He is God. I love God's creation, and I love Jesus because He loves me even when I don't do the right thing, and He helps me be kind. I know that baptism isn't magical and doesn't save me. Jesus died on the cross to save me from my sin. I want to be baptized because I want others to see that Jesus is fully in my heart. I hope that He continues to help me show kindness to others so they get to know Him more. Since asking Jesus into my heart, I feel like I have more courage to share His good news with others.

# HUNTER AREBALO

Hi, I'm Hunter. I'm 13 years old. I grew up in Santa Maria California. I was never baptized as a baby, and I hadn't considered it until about 6 months ago, when I started going back to church with my grandparents, Richard and Christine Arebalo. I can remember going to church since I could even remember anything. Every Sunday, my grandparents would take me to church in the morning. I grew up believing in God and believing He died for our sins on the cross. I never fully understood the meaning, however. A few months ago, I really started to understand and wanted to learn more about Jesus.

I have lived in the same house my entire life. My parents have talked about moving, but we never do. Currently, I live with my mom (Marissa), dad (Ruben), younger brother (11), and younger sister (almost 2). I love my family very much. I am very grateful for everything they do for me—especially my mom. She is a stay-at-home mom, so her life revolves around me and my siblings. She does so much for the three of us and I'm very grateful for that.

I spend most of my time either in my room, school, hanging out with friends, on the baseball fields, or on the basketball court. Throughout my life, I have been doubted a lot and made fun of for my size. Jesus has helped me through these things and helped me block out all the bad negativity. When other people have failed to be there for me, Jesus hasn't failed. People aren't always there for you, but Jesus always is.

When I was younger, I was always overwhelmed by church and thought that I had no choice but to believe in God. I did not feel welcomed. When I matured, I realized that you are not forced to believe or get baptized, but rather, it is a decision that is up to you. Now I feel welcomed by my community and that the choice is up to me.

My knowledge of God has grown dramatically over the past year. I have wanted to learn more about our Father every day and want to follow Him. I want to learn as much about Him as I possibly can because I am interested in who He is and the Gospel.

I truly believe that He died on the cross to pay for our sins. I heavily believe that our life is in His hands and He is always protecting us and wanting the best for us. Jesus loves us. It was about 3 months ago when I realized that. I thank Him every day for bringing me closer to him and bonding with Him. He made us for a reason. He knows what will happen to us. Thank you for everybody that has supported me through my journey with Christ, and thank you to our heavenly Father for caring for me and wanting the best for me.

# ELIJAH HASTINGS

Hi! My name is Elijah Hastings, but you can call me Eli. I am 18 years old and have lived here in Santa Maria my entire life.

When I was a baby, I was placed in the foster system because my birth mother was having some issues. I don't remember a lot from that time except I moved around a lot and that there was a cat that didn't like me. Other than that, I have very little memory of my earliest years.

Thankfully, I was adopted by my family when I was four years old, along with my other siblings. With my adoptive parents, I was provided a stable home where I was able to grow up surrounded by my siblings and other people who love me. In addition to my biological siblings, I also gained another sister!

My parents are both believers and taught me who Jesus was. My father had a more traditional view on church and its part in his walk with Jesus, while my mother believed that you could find Jesus anywhere. She prefers to spend time with God in nature.

I was given a choice in what I believed, which resulted in me and my siblings walking into the children's program at Element when Element was still meeting in the car dealership.

I don't remember that day (my memory isn't the greatest), but Christie Marangi tells me that she remembers the five of us walking into the elementary room that day with huge eyes and very, very quiet behavior. That has definitely changed over the years!

A couple of years ago, when at camp with the high school, I was talking to Cory about some stuff that I had been going through. He prayed over me and for some reason this time it was different.

I felt a connection to Jesus that I hadn't felt before. While we were praying together, I chose to give my life to Jesus.

My take on life is different now that I follow Jesus. Instead of coming to church because my father wants me to, I come so I can learn and grow and connect to the others in the group. I have the desire to get more involved so that I can use my life experiences to help others. My entire attitude has changed.

In June I am heading off to Army boot camp. I am looking forward to my faith in God growing and being able to connect with others and build my community as an adult who loves Jesus.

# CAMERON TEOFILO

My name is Cameron Teofilo. I am 31 years old. I was born and raised right here on the Central Coast. Though I have accepted Jesus Christ as my lord and savior, I have never been baptized. It has always been something I have put off for a better time when I thought I would be a better me. I realize now I will never be sin-free and will always be in need of His grace.

At a young age, I was introduced to the church. When I was maybe 4 years old, my mother married my soon-to-be stepfather. He was a religious man and started taking my mother and myself with him to church. Things were good for a period of time. I enjoyed learning the children's Bible stories and had a deep love for Jesus at a young age. The only problem is my stepfather became physically abusive with my mother; It was bad. Things took a turn for the worse, and this went on for years until my mother eventually left him. I learned through this that God is perfect while man is flawed. Her leaving him was the best thing for us, but that meant we also stopped attending church. I realize now that even though I turned my back on God, He never left me.

Not having the best home dynamic, I became a troubled youth with a lot of anger inside of me, but I always kept my love for Jesus. I just had no guidance of what to do with it. I felt I did not need church or religion because God's love was enough for me. I started hanging out with the wrong people as young as 13 years old, which eventually led to drugs and alcohol. This is something that stuck with me through most of my adult life. I come from a family of alcoholics and addicts. I never really considered myself one because I thought it was recreational and that I could control it. Looking back, that wasn't the case, but Jesus has set me free.

Although things weren't always perfect for me, I have always felt blessed by God and protected by Jesus' love. This past year has been the best year of my life. Many great milestones have happened in my life as of recent, and I know that it is all because of Him. Jesus is my Savior. I realize I am dead without him and He has given me life and purpose. I want to serve others rather than serve and glorify myself...I want this baptism to glorify Him. I know that I will never be righteous enough or worthy enough, but I have felt a calling to confess my love for Jesus to all and to start a more guided journey and walk in His family with people of His family.

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**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 baptisms are schedule for Sunday, September 10, 2023.

Let us know or email us at [connect@ourelement.org](mailto:connect@ourelement.org).