

**BAPTISMS WILL BE:**

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# BAPTISM

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.  
1 Corinthians 12:13



**WHAT & WHY OF BAPTISM**

# WHAT IS BAPTISM?

The word baptism comes from a Greek word meaning “immersion” or “submersion.” It was used to refer to multiple things; for instance, when troubles or calamity befell a person, it could be said they were *baptized* into that calamity because it overwhelmed them.

In the Christian faith, baptism refers to the tradition of publicly demonstrating surrender and submission to Jesus as Lord through immersion in water. The first biblical examples of baptism are found in the Gospel accounts with John the Baptist (Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1).

The practice of baptism comes from Jesus’ own command in Matthew 28:18-20:

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.”*

We see in this passage that Jesus’ disciples are commissioned to make disciples in all people groups. Disciple-making involves two basic tasks: baptizing and teaching.

Baptizing includes the proclamation of the Gospel...what is the Gospel?

## THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is the good news that God has rescued humanity from sin and death through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and is making all things new—even us! When we rebelled against God and ran from Him, God came for us in the person of Christ and rescued us from

ourselves and His wrath. In Christ, we are transformed from dead to alive and from enemies of God to part of His family.

*Ephesians 2:4-5: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.*

*Romans 5:9-10: Since, therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

Water baptism symbolizes the inward cleansing that God performs when people turn from their sins and turn in faith to God for forgiveness of their sins in Christ. The act of baptism also symbolizes our joining with Christ in His death and resurrection—we are given new life found in Jesus.

*Romans 6:4: We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

The teaching part of disciple-making in Jesus’ command involves instructing people to follow Jesus in how we live. For instance, things like community with other believers, study of God’s word, and prayer can help us understand how Jesus is calling us to live each day. As Jesus’ disciples, we grow in submission to His lordship and are made more like him through sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts are continually changed as we become more like Him!

# SHARING YOUR STORY

At Element, we believe storytelling is an important part of our celebration of baptisms. Each of us has a story that reflects God's even bigger story—His story to rescue, redeem, and restore our broken world. Because Element strives to connect the good news of Jesus' rescue to everyday life, we want everyone to understand and be able to share how Jesus is the hero of their story.

Through sharing part of your own story in written form, your church family can more fully celebrate Jesus' rescue and transformation of you, as well as get to know you better as part of our church body. Those who attend baptism celebrations often share how much they enjoy reading stories of what God has done, and is doing, in the lives of those getting baptized.

We understand the thought of writing your story might be intimidating, but we will help you throughout the process, as we believe even this step is an important aspect of disciple-making. If you can understand your own story of God's rescue, you will be better equipped to share that good news with others and make disciples. We believe each of us is called to witness to others in the world, meaning share the love and truth of who God is.

## *How long does my story have to be?*

Probably shorter than you think! There is flexibility here; it can be anywhere from a couple of paragraphs to a full page or more.

## *Where do I start?*

Some brief backstory is always helpful. For instance, things like your name, age, place of birth, and story of how you connected with Element are great starting points! From there, it can be helpful to think of big themes over the course of your life. These questions may help:

- What was most important to you before following Jesus?
- Where do you see that you rebelled against God?

- What was your family like?
- What did you think about religion/church involvement? (We won't name specific denominations, so as not to offend people)
- How did you first hear about Jesus?
- What struck you most about the Gospel message?
- What do you love most about Jesus?
- How is He the hero of your story? How did you see yourself as the hero previously?
- What led you to ultimately decide to surrender to Jesus?
- What kind of transformation have you seen in your heart and life since following Jesus?
- What are you most excited about in life right now?
- How does it feel to be part of a church community?
- How do you want to grow in your relationship with God?
- Who do you feel called to tell about Jesus' rescue in your life?
- What is your hope for the future?
- How has Jesus transformed what you prioritize in life?

Take some time to pray and reflect on what God has done, and is continuing to do, in your life. Feel free to jot down an outline or draft of your story. At a follow-up meeting with one of Element's staff members, they will pray with you, go over your story, and answer questions you might have. Through the very act of crafting our stories, we can often learn interesting things about how we see God, the world, and our own hearts.

Once your story is finished, it will be assembled into a booklet to be shared with Element. However, your story doesn't just stop there! It's important to remember that our stories are ongoing, with challenges, celebrations, growth, and setbacks along the way. Throughout it all...Jesus is faithful! We hope and pray this will be the first of many times you share your story and celebrate who God is.

# Story Examples

Here's a story from a previous booklet:



## 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.

## 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."

# NEXT STEPS

- Work on your story.
- Meet with an Element leader to pray with you and help you in any way, and get you final information for our Baptism Celebrations!

## Additional Resources

- **Connect with a community of people**
  - Join a Quick Connect Group (QCG)
  - Check out and Join a Gospel Community (GC)
- **Other Ways to Learn:**
  - The Weekender
  - Element U
  - Men's/Women's Studies
- **Serve**
  - Help out on Sunday mornings.  
Email [connect@ourelement.org](mailto:connect@ourelement.org)
  - Ekids children's ministries.  
Email [jenna.heuchert@ourelement.org](mailto:jenna.heuchert@ourelement.org)
  - Sunday services. Email [connect@ourelement.org](mailto:connect@ourelement.org)
  - Maintenance/gardening . Email [connect@ourelement.org](mailto:connect@ourelement.org)
  - Help out in our community or world.  
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**CELEBRATING JESUS  
AS OUR HERO**