

# 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 28th, 2024



ELEMENT  
christian church

# OLIVIA BROWN

Hi, my name is Olivia. I am 9 years old and have 3 little sisters. My favorite hobbies are drawing, swimming, and doing martial arts. I love dogs, cats, and babies too! When I grow up I want to be a singer, artist, and teacher. I like to talk to little kids and show them how to do new things.

When I was little, my mom and dad got us new Bibles that told Bible stories. I started learning about Jesus by reading out of my children's Bible at bedtime. The stories were all about God, and it just made my heart glow with joy. My favorite page in the Bible was at the very end. It showed a picture of golden doors to Heaven. I loved how bright it was and it made me want to go to Heaven to be with Jesus.

I have asked Jesus into my heart because I want Him to be with me all of my life. I believe that He died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. Jesus loves us and forgives us even though we don't always do or say the right things...even when we do the worst things.

I want to be baptized to show people that I have asked Jesus into my heart and that I want to live an eternal life with Him. I love Him with all of my heart. I am very excited to get baptized!

# MADISON BROWN

My name is Madison Brown, and I am 7 years old. My birthday is May 5th, which makes me special because I was born on Cinco de Mayo! I like to go outside to play soccer and practice my gymnastics. I want to be a nurse when I grow up because I like to help people feel better when they are sick.

I learn a lot about Jesus at church. We talk about Him at home too. I also try to read my Bible every morning when I wake up. I love Jesus because He died on the cross for me. Jesus helps me with a lot of things. He is always there for me when I need Him. When I was 6 years old, I asked Jesus into my heart. I really wanted Him to be in my heart all of the time and to go to heaven and meet Him someday.

I want to be baptized because I know and believe that Jesus died on the cross for us and came back to life. I want people to know that God loves all of us and is always with us. I want people to trust in God with their hearts and have God in their lives forever. Maybe one day they can get baptized too!

# ALBERT EDWARD HELMLING IV

My name is Albert Helmling IV. I am 34 years old. I was born in Bakersfield, CA, but when I was two years old, I moved out to Lawton, OK and lived there for seven years before planting my roots here on the Central Coast.

I had been baptized before when I was young but have no memories of that happening. I attended different churches during my childhood, but the one that I had called home was First United Methodist Church, right near the heart of Santa Maria, CA. That was where I was first introduced to God—on a mission trip in San Diego when I was 12. He had been the rock of my life during my childhood, albeit rough, due to some life-changing events that had affected my family.

My life was changed dramatically when my ex-father was sentenced to prison time, and that was when I lost my way in the hurt and confusion. Those years where I was searching for answers - I had distanced myself from God but He was still there, waiting for me to return to Him. A Bible verse that I had been keeping close to my heart was "My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word." (Psalm 119:28) I didn't feel true sorrow over my sin at that time, because of what my ex-father had done. The damage was dealt and I turned my back to God, but He was patient with me over the next 17 years.

About seven months ago, God called out to me. He called for me to return to Him, and I felt His urging to connect with a church. That is how I was led to Element.

I understand that my life hasn't been the best, that I know, but knowing and submitting to Jesus has brought me pure joy. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He has forgiven me for my transgressions. Jesus is my rock, my Savior. I am ready to celebrate this through baptism and show others my desire to live my life fully in His Holiness.

# RICHARD TELL, JR.

Hello,

My name is Richard Tell, Jr. I am 53 years old. I enjoy fishing and cooking. As a child, I was brought up in church and had some exposure to who Jesus was. Unfortunately, as a young man, I only attended church every now and then. As I grew older, I was living a lifestyle that I knew was wrong; I knew it was not how Jesus would want me to live.

A few years ago, I started following a preacher on TikTok. At one point, He shared Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." That is when I surrendered to Jesus and was saved by faith. This preacher also asked anyone that was listening to read the Bible every day for half an hour for 3 months. That was 2-3 years ago.

To this day, I read the Bible and pray when I wake up in the morning and before I go to bed at night. I've found that reading Scripture and learning more about Jesus has given me peace and calmed my temper. It was also during this time that my family and I started attending Element consistently. If we cannot be in our seats in person, we watch together on YouTube. I give Jesus thanks for all the blessings He has given me, my family, and friends, and I am excited to grow more in Him.

# MATT COOPER

My name is Matthew Cooper. I am 38 years old. I was born and raised here on the Central Coast. Thanks to the love and devotion of my parents, I attended private Christian schools. Financially, I don't know how they did it. At school, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior in second grade. Every child growing up in church/Christian schools knows John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." An everlasting life with someone who was willing to die for you...what is there not to like? As time went on, my faith faded. Sports, work, friends, entertainment, and girlfriends started to crowd out Jesus. The guilt led to pain, which led to denial, which led to "freedom from God" to do whatever I wanted.

## **Matthew 18:12-13**

*What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.*

Looking back, Jesus has been on my heels since I was a child. I had many "ideals" as to what my life, career, family, etc. was going to look like. Needless to say, I achieved none of those ideals. Instead, I am surrounded by four amazing children, a beautiful wife, extended family, and a church family. I love the saying, "Tell God your plans so He can laugh." I am a pretty intense/stubborn individual, so I am assuming there has been a great deal of loving laughter/head-shaking from God. Through His generosity, knowledge, and persistence, He opened/kicked me through doors I didn't know I needed and paths I didn't want, and He closed many doors. Not to say I didn't try to take an axe to some

of those closed doors, because I did. Finally, after two decades, He broke me down and rebuilt me.

During this breaking/rebuilding process, a good friend was constantly, almost annoyingly, peppering me with Bible verses for different situations in my life. Between my friend's persistence (he will always say he is just a vessel), and Aaron's messages on grace, I finally gave into the fire that had been burning in my soul. The head knowledge finally moved to the heart. It became more about relationship with God and seeing Him as a father, instead of the legal boundaries I thought were carved out in the Bible. Ever since then, it has been full steam ahead to grow more in Christ, serve, and be an example for my family and those around me.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of my journey. Christ has placed you in my path as a blessing to me and my family. Thank you to my lovely wife that is always pushing me to be my best, and to my kids, who always crave my attention, showing me how I am to be towards God. Baptism has been in the back of my head on and off for a while. It is finally time.

Here I am, Lord. I make this public display of my choice to follow and serve You. Thank you for humbly sacrificing Yourself for my sins. Thank you for all the lessons and blessings. Please use me as your vessel and tool to bless and empower others. Amen.

# ZOEY COOPER

Hello, for those who don't know me, I'm Zoey Cooper. I'm 10 years old, and I live with my mom, dad, older and younger sisters, my brother, and my dog. I grew up listening to country music like Morgan Wallen.

My favorite Bible verse is John 3:16, which is the first verse I ever memorized. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son and that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

My favorite Bible story is when Jesus was being crucified, and the thief on his right side said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom", and then Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Also, a favorite saying, which my sister, Lexi, taught me is that "with faith, you can move mountains with God", which comes from Matthew 17:20-21.

After learning about Jesus and how He loved us so much in giving His life for us, I knew I wanted to follow Him right away, so at the age of 9 years old, I made the decision to give my life to Jesus and follow Him.

I also learned that being baptized is another step in trusting and following God, so I've decided that I want to show publicly I trust in the Lord and I'm following Him.

# MICHELLE GIBBONS

My name is Michelle Gibbons and I am 40 years old. The question of "Who is Jesus and what has He done for me?" has taken me on an interesting rabbit hole in my mind, emotions, and soul. Growing up Catholic, I knew the story of how Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead 3 days later, and ascended to heaven 40 days after that. I always believed and never doubted this or questioned Jesus' bodily resurrection. What I didn't really understand was why? I was taught it was for my sins but what did Jesus dying have to do with the price of rice, so to speak?

The main people in the Bible were just characters in a story to me. I knew the important events but did not have a true grasp of what it all meant or led up to. Five years ago, after continually watching/listening to Joyce Meyer, I bought a Bible and started randomly letting God lead me to where He thought I should read. I also went to my first Bible Study 2 years ago and it was about Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Through that, I learned why Jesus was/is called the "Sacrificial Lamb" and how through His death (and belief in Him as our Savior), we get a straight shot to Heaven after death. We also no longer have to give ritual sacrifices of any kind. To say it was an eye opener doesn't begin to explain the feeling. It caused such an emotional uprise in me that I started crying thinking of the pain He endured.

In 2021, I went to a Christian church and fell in love with the Bible study way of teaching about God and how I should live my life according to His word. After 37 years of growing up in the Catholic Church, I have had many questions and mixed emotions. I started watching The Chosen and began to realize Jesus WAS REAL! Not just some bedtime story. Jesus is the most amazing person to ever live and the fact that He knew the pain and suffering He was going to endure for someone like me, over 2000 years later, has finally hit me. He is the friend that I have longed for. He is the blanket on

# MICHELLE GIBBONS (CONTINUED)

a cold night that brings so much warmth and comfort. He is what has turned me around from being stuck in my past to looking forward and wanting to be the best mom, wife, and friend.

It was a new thing for me knowing that I can talk to God and ask for forgiveness for a mistake I made and have it completely erased from His mind! If God isn't going to hold it against me, then why should I? Basically, to quote Mary Magdalene from the Chosen, "I was one way and now I am completely different. And the thing that happened in between was Him..." One of the biggest things that has helped is knowing that no matter where I am, God meets me there. I don't have to jump through hoops before He accepts me. God loves me. He doesn't care if I made a mistake or didn't do things how He wanted me to. HE LOVES ME ALL THE TIME! There's nothing I NEED to do to win His love or acceptance. I have learned to listen for His guidance and sometimes I really do not like what He asks, but I know it is vital to obey.

I felt strongly God was asking me to text my mom (after 5 years of no contact) and I prayed for several days before following through. I was terrified, but once I did what God asked of me, I had such a feeling of peace. I gave thanks to God for the strength to follow His command. I don't want to end up like Jonah, fighting God's plan only to be spit out right where He wants me. Granted, I like to think He shakes His head at me like any parent does asking "really Michelle?" He is THE BEST PARENT! He doesn't stay mad. He doesn't give harsh punishments. He doesn't chastise. He is slow to anger, quick to listen and always gives love, compassion and kindness.

I am thankful for my Catholic roots because knowing God helped me through some rough times. Now, I feel closer to God. I am continually doing what I can to grow in my relationship with the Lord and have a closeness to Him, as with my husband or close

friend. Do I fall off the bandwagon still? Yup! But I know that God is there waiting to help me back up. God's grace gives me hope that I will get better each time and not be judged when I fall short. I give thanks for the people God has sent to guide me in the direction of getting to know Him and learning that I can simply have a conversation with Him. I am still uncovering differences between what I was raised to know and what the Bible says. I cannot give thanks enough knowing that God is always by my side, watching over me and guiding me.

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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 baptism will be on September 1, 2024.

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