



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

CANDACE D. STEPHENSON
ARLINGTON CAMPUS

As a child, my mother raised us as Roman Catholic, but I had no understanding of the Scriptures repeated back to the priest at the Catholic services. During holidays, I remembered the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, that He was born in a manger in Bethlehem. Then came along the Easter eggs and bunny basket. I knew there had to be more, but I didn't know what. I went to a Baptist church with some neighborhood friends, I was a part of the choir and participated in the Bible summer camps. So, when my mom gave me the choice I got baptized as a Baptist at the age of 11 in Ohio.

Things happened to me as child that I wish not to remember, a non-family member who watched over me was verbally and physically abusive. I never said a word until years later to my family. As I grew older, I felt confused with my life. I was shy, timid, submissive and I lacked confidence in myself. I wondered why God brought me into this life. I became depressed and felt that I had no reason to be here. I had suicidal thoughts and wondered if my family would miss me if I followed through with them.

I began speaking to God out loud, I cried and cried out to Him telling Him that I did not understand this faith word. I asked Him "What do I need to do to understand the word, faith?" I began going to a different church, met different people, I traveled and schooled in Europe and finished college. I moved to the West Coast to find something that I could call my own. The experiences were okay, but I knew I was not truly complete.

My mother and older brother both passed away not that long ago, this brought me back home and closer to my sisters. While, notifying family members, I happened to reunite with someone from my past. God puts people in our lives to draw us to Him- using an old high school photo, a social media message, several phone calls, Song of Solomon journals mailed to me, a church home established, new friends greeting me, a proposal on Facetime, a wedding and moving to Jacksonville for good. I know faith is the conviction of things not seen but truly believed, He showed me Him and I surrendered my life to that faith.

Candace Stephenson



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

KEVIN DORSEY
BAYMEADOWS CAMPUS

I was born and raised in upstate New York, a place outside of Syracuse. It was predominantly Irish and Italian where most people were raised Catholic. I was baptized when I was a child, I believe that was the right thing to do by my parents. I lived a troubled life when I left Syracuse and moved to Jacksonville. Consumed with drugs alcohol and woman that I treated badly. I felt that this is my life, and I can't change it. This will just be my normal life.

I've been working with a friend for over 30 years, we have had our ups and downs to say the least. But he gave me a Zach Williams CD around three years ago and asked me to come to church with him and his family. I decided to go but was as nervous as can be. I thought I was going to get sick in the parking lot. Why me? I kept on asking myself. I've let them down so many times I couldn't even count them all. We get into the church and Pastor Joby's sermon was on 2 Timothy and the band sang the song, *Fear is a Liar*. My friend was always saying that to me, that fear is a liar, I knew this was why I was here. I knew He was speaking to me, like wait a minute. Fear is a liar!

I now have been attending Eleven22 for around three years. I serve on the Nehemiah serve staff at the Baymeadows campus and just recently started going to a disciple group. I believe God was looking for me all this time and was to blind to see that. I decided to be re-baptized because I wanted to be washed clean from all my sins. My family didn't understand. They said, you've already been baptized. But I wanted to do this for everyone I let down and for people to know that Jesus truly does save. I'm living proof. Jesus is my Lord and Savior, forever! I'm trying to live a somewhat normal life and I know I am always going to have struggles and battles, but I know Jesus is going to be there walking with me through them. He is the true light in my darkest days.

Kevin Dorsey



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

PASTOR TODD HICKOX FOR AMELIA HICKOX, 7
FLEMING ISLAND CAMPUS

Toward the end of 2013 when my wife Heather and I found out we were having a little girl, we both began to pray for the day she would surrender to Jesus and follow Him. I can remember making Amelia's nursery the place I would do my quiet time and praying that she would be used of God in her lifetime. I remember not knowing what that would look like, and it terrified me. I just knew we wanted to give her to Jesus.

I prayed that she would grow up not remembering a day that Jesus wasn't her Lord. As early as we could, we would read the Jesus Storybook Bible and pray over her. Our church did a great job partnering with us in discipling her at home with resources and questions that we could use to continue the conversations they had in Eleven22 Kids ministry environments. We didn't always do the best job following up on those, but when we did, she was ready.

It was incredible to watch her little mind build and form on the foundation that the Scriptures had laid before her. Her prayers with us at night became more intimate and loving. She is now seven years old. I won't lie, I thought she was too young to really understand. I was wrong. On the way home from school one day, she told Heather that she wanted to be baptized.

Beach Baptism has been a big deal for a few years to our family here at Eleven22, and she wanted to be baptized at the beach. When she and Heather called me on the way home and told me my immediate thought was, "she still doesn't get it, maybe soon, but not yet." That opened the door to incredible gospel conversations with her.

I began to realize that my theological brain couldn't outrun her child-like faith. That's all Jesus wanted in those moments. For her to know the Father. She knew and she believed that Jesus was her Lord and Savior and she followed, like a child. In a way, that's all I want: to believe like her.

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." This was the verse that I had to cling to. Those very words of Jesus had to remind me to move out of the way and watch her accept His invitation. Beach Baptism 2022 was the day we have prayed for since before Amelia was born. It's a day Heather and I won't forget, and neither will she. Praise the Lord!

Pastor Todd Hickox



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

LUKE JONES
JESUP CAMPUS

I only recently gave my life to Christ, and actually meant it. My dad said something that has always resounded with it. "It is better to die and be a Christian, than to be an Atheist and get it wrong." That was the extent of my relationship with Christ. Now, I fully trust and believe in Him. He saved my life, and I believe I should warn others about the temptations the world has to offer. I hide nothing about my past because I have nothing to hide. God saved my life, the least I can do is show Him my eternal gratitude.

I drank too much, did a whole lot of drugs and was a drug dealer. These choices led to me being in a horrible wreck, I was in a coma for three months and in the hospital for six months. I broke my back and had a traumatic brain injury, it left me in a wheelchair. I later would think long and hard about my wreck. The only reason I lived, was His divine intervention. I know I would have gone to hell if I would have died in the wreck, there is no doubt about it. Through this trauma I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. I give Him praise for what He has already done. God stuck His hand out and said "I'm not done with this one yet."

I'm very new at the whole being a Christian thing (that actually believes). I do everything I can with all that I have. I know I will mess up but the passion I have for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is incredible; I finally feel at home. Being in a wheelchair is bad, but I know God will still find a way to use me. I used to think if I never walked on my own again that life was over for me. If I never walk again, I have accepted that, but I'm still going to live, and I am going to live abundantly and prosperously.

I'm not scared if I never walk again, I'm where I'm at for a reason. To perform His will and move on to the next phase of my life. The Lord has already provided for me in my current situation, and I know He will continue to do so.

Luke Jones



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

CHRIS ORTIZ
MANDARIN CAMPUS

March 10, 2022, I surrendered my life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Before my surrendering, my life revolved around me trying to be accepted, trying to be “good enough.” Believing that once I achieved it, I would be loved and accepted. The more I tried to fill the void within me, it only grew bigger. When all my hope was lost, when my world went silent and I could not put myself back together, that’s when God’s love found me.

My void started during childhood, my mother gave me away at age five and at eight my father disowned me saying the words “you are no son of mine.” Feeling neglected and abandoned, my grandmother took custody of me till I was 16 and could defend myself. Caring for me, she raised me in a bible-based household. Through her I learned who God was and religiously followed the house “laws.”

At 16, she gave me back to my father and two years later I joined the Navy. My mindset was, if I did all the right things, one day I could create a home where I would be loved. Haunted by my fear of abandonment I chased after success, money and relationships, pushing myself to be better and good enough.

While deployed on a submarine, I pushed myself into a neurological overload. Medically evacuated, I was diagnosed with a neurological disorder and spent the next two weeks learning to walk and talk again. Over the next several months I struggled with my health, watched friends disappear and my financial security crash. My life became a mess, my fear of abandonment became real and my world went silent.

In the moment of my helplessness, having nothing to offer, I cried out to God asking him to save me. I felt His love pour over me, accepted by the Father I’ve always wanted. I wanted nothing more than to love, know and have a relationship with Him.

The next day I surrendered my life to the lordship of Jesus Christ, after hearing Pastor Joby’s message that when Jesus said “it is finished” it counted for me. That God put forth His Son as propitiation to satisfy a debt and meet the standard I could never meet, and He wanted me in all my broken pieces. My testimony is that of gratitude, that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, I am loved, accepted and free.

Chris Ortiz



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

ABIGAIL CHEK

ELEVEN22 ONLINE (FORMALLY ATTENDED ARLINGTON CAMPUS)

New to the area, I went to the poles to see what the buzz was all about. It was incredible! Everyone out there was so full of love and kindness. As we waited for the next set to roll in, a woman happened to see my cross necklace and asked if I had found a church yet. When I said no, she asked if I wanted to go to church with her that following Sunday at San Pablo. I immediately said YES!

It was in that service, (which happened to be at Saturated) that I realized I've never experienced Jesus like this before. In the weeks and months that followed, somewhere inside me, I began to believe that the cross did in fact count for me and that I truly was made in the image of God Himself.

I no longer needed to live the world's way and unsuccessfully strive to make others happy or keep checking a box of accomplishments to be satisfied. Instead, I found rest in knowing that Jesus Christ died, so that I might dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself, so that I may have a relationship with our heavenly Father. Jesus Christ IS my Lord and Savior!

I now have a different outlook on life. I am grateful and beyond blessed with the earthly accomplishment that the Lord has given me, and I am excited to see how He uses those things that He has blessed me with for His glory. Lesley, the woman I met at the poles is now a dear friend and my sister in Christ.

Through I may no longer live in Jacksonville, my heart will always be with the city. It is where my soul was saved, where I died to myself and came alive in Christ! Life is so much more than earthly things; the Lord has blessed me with knowing Him and has called to be a light for others to shine Him.

I know that I am not my own and in Him I can do all that He has set before me. The gift of salvation is the greatest gift of all. I pray to be a steward of His love and share the good news of gospel in every aspect of my life!

JESUS CHRIST IS MY LORD AND SAVIOR!

Abigail Chek



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

CAMILLE MEGARD HARRIS
SAN PABLO CAMPUS

I grew up going to an Evangelical church and I hated it. Something just didn't feel right. At 18 I left my parent's house to join the French army and became a military doctor. I was my own leader and got burned quite a few times even though I believed something superior was there somewhere.

I think I can say that I started to really listen to God in April 2019. I was on deployment in Iraq when one of my friends, who was also on deployment, but in Africa was killed by an IED. I felt an urge to read the Bible, I can't explain why, I just felt it. At that time, I wasn't a true believer, so I hadn't brought a Bible with me. Sure thing a few hours later, at lunchtime, I go inside this room where we usually eat and there it is in the middle, a table, with a lot of Bibles (and candies) with a sign "help yourself."

When I came back from deployment in France, I joined a church and a disciple group, but it was Protestant and again something didn't feel quite right (we don't have non-denominational churches in France). Then on November 25, 2019, my brother died on deployment, I was angry at God. I couldn't understand why the death of my brother was part of His perfect plan. It just didn't make any sense. I went down, I was isolated because of Covid, I struggled with depression, anxiety and suicide, but it wasn't my time and God brought me back to the light. The process of healing started.

When I first came to The Church of Eleven 22 a year ago, what I loved the most was that it is a movement for all people. I finally felt worthy of God's love, no judgments. After a few Sundays at church, I surrendered my life and the anger vanished. I felt a peace in my heart and no more anxiety. I was ready for the next step, baptism. So, I went to Beach Baptism this past May and proclaimed publicly that Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

Camille Megard Harris



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

BLAKELY STONE, 9
ST. JOHNS CAMPUS

It started when I was visiting disciple groups with my daddy. We were visiting groups that would be attending the new St. Johns campus. We talked a lot in the car and on this trip, we were talking about being a Christian. I knew the gospel and I knew I loved Jesus. My main question for my dad was if I had to be baptized right away.

I was afraid of being baptized because I didn't really want a lot of attention on me. That night I had a nightmare, in my nightmare Heaven was underwater. My family was alive and at the surface. Satan asked me if God was really the one that could save me? Satan told me he could get me back to my family on the surface. I knew that wasn't true, I knew God was the only one that could save me, and I woke up really scared and ran to my parent's bedroom.

The next day it was on my mind all day at school. When I got home, I told my mom and sister that I was ready to become a Christian. I knew I was a sinner and that Jesus died to save me. I prayed that Jesus would be my Lord and Savior.

I waited a year to be baptized. I was still a little bit scared of being in front of a lot of people when I first became a Christian. I decided that this year I wasn't scared anymore, and I was ready to be baptized at Beach Baptism.

There were a lot of people there, but I wanted to make my faith public. My mom and my sister walked out in the water with me, and my daddy was already out there. They all helped baptized me. It was really fun, and I gave my daddy a big hug after. I'm really glad I overcame my fear and got baptized.

Blakely Stone