

Baptistries Around the World

Dr. Dale Underwood, Director

“Eliminating delays and excuses for immersing taught believers”

“A STUDY OF BAPTISM”

How can we have confidence when or if one asking to be baptized knows and understands what he or she is doing? The truthful answer is: “Being unable to see into minds and hearts, we don’t.”

The “next best thing” we can do is our best to see what they know about it. We use our seven-lesson course, “A Study of Baptism.” Each lesson sent has an accompanying tract related to the topic. The lesson asks ten questions, 70 total. This provides us with a deeper level of assurance as to the student’s readiness to obey the Gospel. The 7 topics are:

“A Study
of
Baptism”

#1 – “**So, You Want to Do What - Be Baptized?**” We are looking for proper or improper motives.

#2 – “**What Connection Does Faith Have with Baptism?**” We searching for a faith demonstrated in obedience, not faith by itself.

#3 – “**Who Is Jesus to You?**” We

stress more than intellectual knowledge but a belief openly declaring Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior.

#4 – “**Turn or Burn!**” Repentance requires life changes.

#5 – “**Baptism**” No option or acceptable substitute.

#6 – “**After Baptism – What’s Next?**” From milk to meat.

#7 – “**What Do You Know?**” A final summarizing test.

“Study of Baptism”

(The Tract)

A huge debt of gratitude is owed to Joe and Mary Lou McKissick. Their lives were spent serving others. Joe’s mission work in South Africa is remembered as are efforts at Webb Chapel, Eldridge Road and Pruitt Gerontology Center at ACU.



At Eldridge Road, Joe did a marvelous work in area prisons but faced stiff opposition to immersing those he taught. He put his Bible knowledge and mission-field skills to great use. Joe wrote a tract to prepare inmates for baptism or endure possible long delays (see a copy inside). This tool is still used today.

We use a 7-lesson correspondence course, “A Study of Baptism,” that includes a tract with each of them. Joe’s tract accompanies lesson 5 in the series. On January 10, 2017, Joe won his final victory over death but is still teaching prisoners today who desire to be baptized into Christ.

BRIEF HISTORY

Part Two:

We began to see “wear and tear” on our equipment after 30-40 baptisms. The old suitcase collapsed. After a baptism, we tossed in wet towels, a leaking water hose, and the lining fell out. Plus, it stunk. So, Buck shopped until he found a duffle-bag at Sears for \$35. The worst thing was they had them in assorted green, brown, purple, and yellow colors. When fresh stock came in, we bought them out. The baptistry parts had to squeeze in tightly. The jail had their own water hose and began supplying towels which lightened the load.

The portable baptistry was a hit at workshops. Others in ministry had the same problem and asked us for help. We demonstrated how to put one together, but they wanted us to supply them. We assembled several at a time, let folks know what it cost, and they sent a check including freight. We named the program *Baptistries Across America*. Our goal was to baptistries inside jails and prisons across the United States. It remains our #1 objective.

We were surprised some facilities would not accept our baptistry. They cited two reasons: (1) they would not allow metal (aluminum), and (2) they didn’t like how it looked. While we were focusing on functionality, some complained that the units were not sufficiently “dignified” for the *sacred* ceremony of baptism.

Then enters Joe Garman, President of American Rehabilitation Ministries, in Joplin, Missouri (ARM). They produce *permanent* baptistries with a fiberglass tub, plywood frame, a heat-pump attachment, casters, steps, lectern, and a removable “communion-table” top. On the front, one of two statements may be engraved: “Repent and Be Baptized” or “In Remembrance of Me.” They are much more expensive but solved the “appearance” issue. We have put many of these in jails and prisons.

(Part Three: third quarter)

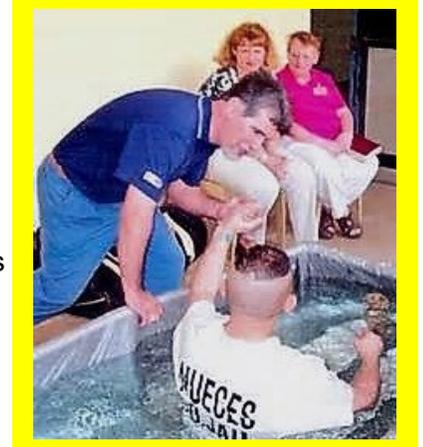
QUESTIONS ON PRISON BAPTISMS

We report thousands of baptism requests and are asked: “How many *are* baptized each year?” We baptize hundreds locally but report *requests*. We do keep a running total but it is tempting to get caught up in the “numbers” game. Our emphasis is on *teaching*. This was Paul’s response: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (First Corinthians 1:17). He followed Jesus’ example in John 4:2 – “Jesus Himself was not baptizing but His disciples were.” Of course, Paul believed and taught baptism as essential and listed some by name that he actually baptized. We believe in the power of the gospel so much that when one is properly taught, he will chase someone down to be immersed. If not fully taught, *any excuse will do*.

“Where Do Baptism Requests Come From?”

We conservatively estimate that more than 10,000 baptisms occur annually in the United States as a direct result of churches of Christ and individual Christians involved in jail and prison ministries. As many as 1,800-2500 are through *this* ministry. We cannot keep up with exact numbers, but requests come from the variety of sources listed below:

- 1) Local requests (county jails, prisons, halfway houses, detention centers).
- 2) Follow-up on the 331 baptistries we have placed in the USA alone and used An average of 37 times each per year (12,247).
- 3) 50,000+ correspondence students in almost every state in the nation.
- 4) *Reconciled & Renewed* weekend seminars and “Meanest Man in Texas” Weekends.
- 5) Requests via letters, phone calls, faxes, emails.
- 6) Help requested by fellow volunteers in special circumstances.
- 7) Reports of workers baptizing in jails and prisons as a result of weekly classes and services. Plus, NLBM has 24 “Regional Directors” reporting in 13 states.



“How Many Requests Are Fulfilled?”

We estimate 60-70% of requested baptisms are completed. Often, when we contact the person, he has *already* been baptized. *Praise the Lord!* Sometimes he is mixed up/confused, his request was misunderstood, or we learn he has been baptized. If baptized properly, his need may be that of *restoration* – not immersion. Others decide they need more study before being baptized. Following further study, a few decide they do *not* want to do it. Very few end up choosing to wait until release. However, we often hear from those being baptized later.

“How Many Stay Faithful?”

“What is meant by *staying faithful*?” All the prison system seeks is that they do not return. But we want them actively engaged in the life of the local church, attending regularly, and sharing their faith with others. Our best guess is that the percentage of those remaining *faithful* is equal to or a little above that of new converts in the local congregation. Make a list of those baptized a year ago where you worship. Where are they today? The average is usually 50%. *We can do better than this.*

“Why Many Fall Away”

We like to believe every prisoner was fully taught and knew what he was doing when baptized. Most penal systems “transfer” offenders often from one unit to another. This often means being moved from where a strong prison work existed to a weaker one or one where the Lord’s church has zero presence. Many end up being influenced more by a unit chaplain and “generic” or “protestant” services. By the time of his release, his belief system has changed or at best, he is confused, and we will likely never see or hear from him again. *This is another reason we need your help.*

STATES TARGETED

These states are the only ones in the USA where we have *not* placed a baptistry in a county jail or prison. You may help by reaching out to church leaders or individual Christians you know to assist in opening these doors.

Connecticut
Delaware
North Dakota

Iowa
Vermont
Rhode Island
South Dakota

Hawaii
Utah
Idaho

Baptistries Around the World is overseen by the shepherds, Kings Crossing Church of Christ, 5901 Yorktown Boulevard, Corpus Christi, Texas 78414 (Ron Cardwell, Kyde Eddleman, Robert Illgen, Stephen Johnston, Jack North, and Richard Scanio).

Contact Information: The physical office of *Baptistries Around the World* is 3833 South Staples, Suite S-101, Corpus Christi, Texas 78411 (361) 855-3372
You may email us at kcprisonministries@gmail.com. Welcome to our website at www.kingscrossingprisonministries.org.