

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

WHY JOIN OUR CHURCH?

If you would like more information about our church you may go the following Web Sites:

International Web Site
www.cogop.org

Heartland America Website
www.heartlandogop.org

Membership 101 — Part 1

WHY JOIN OUR CHURCH?

* **The Church belongs to Jesus.** In Matthew 16:18, He calls it, "my church." Acts 20:28 states that He purchased it "with his own blood." *If the church belongs to Jesus, it is important for us to belong to the church.*

* **Jesus loves the church.** According to Ephesians 5:25, He "loved the church and gave himself for it." *He loved it, so should we.*

* **Jesus is the head of the church.** Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:22 that God "put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." He further states in Colossians 1:18 that Jesus "is the head of the body, the church." *If the church is important enough for Jesus to be its head, we need to be a part of it.*

* **The church was divinely instituted.** Jesus stated in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church." Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:20 that Jesus is the "chief corner stone" on which the church is built. *When offered the opportunity to participate in something divine, we should take the offer gladly.*

* **Jesus Himself established the church.** In Mark 3:13-15, Jesus "called to Him whom He would" to form the nucleus of the church. *If He started the church, we need to be a part of it.*

* **The Holy Spirit empowered the church.** Jesus promised in Acts 1:8 that the church would "receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come." That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when His church was "all filled with the Holy Ghost." *If the Holy Spirit is the power of the church, it is important for us to be attached to that source of power.*

* **Once established, members were added to the church by God Himself.** Acts 2:47 records that "the Lord added to the church daily." Acts 5:14 says that multitudes of both men and women were being "added to the Lord." *If the church is important enough to God to be involved, it is important enough for us to be involved.*

* **The church properly exercises government and discipline.** In Matthew 16:19, the church was given the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" by Jesus Himself. In Hebrews 13:17, ordained church leaders were given spiritual authority over the members for the sake of their souls. *If we remain outside the fellowship of the church, it is highly likely that we will remain outside the provision of government and discipline, which are given for our protection and growth.*

In addition to the points mentioned, the church provides for us a number of necessary things to which we could not have full access outside the relationship of the church. This would include the following:

- **Discipleship**
- **Fellowship**
- **Protection and Safety**
- **Teaching**
- **Accountability**
- **An Outlet for Gifting and Service**
- **An Arena for Corporate Worship**
- **A Channel for Stewardship**
- **A Place to Mature Spiritually**
- **A Biblical Worldview**

THE MOST CRITICAL ELEMENT

As important as all of the preceding elements are, they fall short of what Jesus commissioned us to do. He did not tell us to go into the world and make church members. Instead, He said in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . ." (NKJV) We want to offer completeness to every believer. We want to offer direction into true discipleship, and teach the principle that everyone has the same commission to "make" disciples of others.

A disciple may be defined as "a follower," "a student," or, perhaps most appropriately, "an apprentice." An apprentice is one who joins himself or herself in a long-term relationship to a master in order to learn a trade or craft. In the spiritual sense, the master craftsman of the spiritual life is Jesus Christ, and those who would be His disciples must join themselves intimately to Him and follow Him daily in order to become like Him.

The experience of coming to Christ **as Savior** is actually the beginning step in a lifelong process of becoming **like Christ**.

Joining the church is much like one being a part of a family which provides the environment for an infant to mature into adulthood. If a family chooses to leave a baby to itself once it is born, with no further nurture or encouragement, it will never become a healthy adult.

Membership candidates will be introduced to the Biblical standards upon which our faith and practice as a church is founded, and we will share the polity and procedures of how our church functions physically and financially. We do not, however, believe that relying on codes and rules of behavior will produce spiritual maturity. **We believe that our church is called to lead believers to constantly experience intimate, loving relationships with God and His children.** It is in such an environment that members become mature believers, believers become disciples, and Christians grow into Christ likeness, until we all may come to "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

The Church of God of Prophecy has churches established in over 100 nations around the world. Our international offices are in Cleveland, Tennessee and has been in existence for over 100 years. The "...of Prophecy" was added to the original name of "Church of God" resulting from a decision made following a conflict relating to church polity and governmental operation. In recent years the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) and the Church of God of Prophecy have re-established a close relationship in the common goal of reaping the last days harvest of souls.