

## What is the definition of the term *Gnostic*?

The definition of the word *Gnostic* is about as easy to nail down as a flopping fish. It is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “to know.” In the case of Gnosticism, what is “known” has shifted over the thousands of years since [Gnosticism](#) first reared its head during the formation and solidification of the early church.

Basically, the Gnostic believes in acquiring special, mystical knowledge as the means for salvation. According to Gnostic beliefs, there is a Great God that is good and perfect, but impersonal and unknowable. The creator of the universe was actually a lesser deity—a cheap knock-off of the “true God”—who wanted to create a flawless material universe but botched the job. Instead of having a utopia, we ended up with a world infected with pain, misery, and intellectual and spiritual blindness; all matter is now corrupt and evil. However, when this lesser deity created man, he accidentally imbued humanity with a spark of the “true” God’s spirit, making man an inherently good soul trapped in the confines of an evil, material body.

Contrary to a message of salvation through Christ alone ([Acts 4:12](#)), the Gnostic Jesus brings a message of self-redemption. Man only needs to examine his inner “spark” to find the knowledge needed to free himself from his material body and reach God. This alleged purity of heart is the exact opposite of what is stated in [Jeremiah 17:9](#): “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Today, Gnosticism has evolved and branched out from the exclusively spiritual into the secular and scientific. Psychologist [C. G. Jung](#) praised Gnosticism as superior to traditional Christianity as a way of thinking. Another form

of Gnosticism denies the existence of God altogether, while embracing an eternal—but still flawed—universe. This atheistic form of Gnosticism doesn't see the material world as totally evil, but as flawed and incomplete. Mankind becomes the “deity,” and it is his right to improve the human body and the world around him through his own wisdom.

Christianity and Gnosticism are mutually exclusive; however, it is easy for a Gnostic mindset to seep into our own thinking if we're not careful ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). The Gnostic is pursuing goodness, but, instead of seeking to be regenerated by Christ, he grabs hold of a man-centered purpose for living. Gnostic thought makes man “wise in [his] own eyes” ([Isaiah 5:21](#)), something [Proverbs 3:7](#) pointedly advises against: “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”

Gnostic thinking claims that deeper truth can be found apart from God. But [Proverbs 1:7](#) says, “The [fear of the Lord](#) is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Instead of searching our corrupt, flawed “inner selves” for answers, we should instead test everything against the revealed Word of God ([1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)). In the end, it is God's truth alone that can be trusted.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/gnostic-definition.html>

**Resources** used for the OCC Thursday Bible Study include:

<http://orcuttchristian.org/page6.html>: Scroll down to “Gnosticism”

Peter Jones, Ph.D: *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age*

: *The Pagan Heart of Today's Culture*  
: *Spirit Wars: Pagan revival in Christian*

America

Roger Chambers, Ph.D.: *Christianity and the Cults*

Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*

Harold Brown, Ph.D.: *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*

Fritz Ridenour: *So What's the Difference: A look at 20 Worldviews...and How they Compare to Christianity*

Hans Jonas, Ph.D.: *The Gnostic Religion: the message of the alien God and the beginnings of Christianity*

Douglas Groothuis, Ph.D.: *Confronting the New Age; How to resist a growing religious movement*

: *Unmasking the New Age: Is there a new religious movement trying to transform society*

David Clark, Ph.D. and Norman Geisler, Ph.D.:

*Apologetics in the New Age: A Christian critique of Pantheism*