

# Horoscopes and fortune cookies: all in good fun?

[the catholic spirit.com /faith/focus-on-faith/seeking-answers/horoscopes-fortune-cookies-good-fun/](https://www.thecatholicspirit.com/faith/focus-on-faith/seeking-answers/horoscopes-fortune-cookies-good-fun/)

**Q. How come we should not read the horoscope that is in the newspaper? What if I only read it for fun? What if we go to a Chinese restaurant and get a fortune cookie? Can we read that?**

**A.** People often look to horoscopes for one of two reasons: for guidance or for fun. One is absolutely prohibited. The other is discouraged.

The Catholic Church affirms the practical and powerful role of both faith and reason. Even more, we emphasize that faith has to be rooted in reason. The heart of the horoscope issue is that I am looking to something other than reason or God for guidance.

Our faith is rooted in two sources: reason and revelation. What can we know about reality through serious thinking? This is reason. What could we not know about the world except through God taking the initiative and communicating himself to us? This is revelation.

If they are true, reason and revelation will never contradict each other. If they are true, reason will help faith, and faith will help reason.

Horoscopes violate both reason and faith. Horoscopes violate reason because there is literally nothing reasonable about them. They have no grounding in reality. They have been shown over and over to have no validity. If someone were to allow a horoscope to have any [influence] over their decisions, it would be a serious affront to the human capacity to think.

Horoscopes also violate faith. What is it to “have faith”? Essentially, it is to trust.

We have faith in God, which means more than that we believe in God. It means we actually trust God with our lives, our relationships, our future and our decisions. If a person bases a decision off a horoscope, they are placing their faith in something other than reason or God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it like this: “All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to ‘unveil’ the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone” (CCC 2116).

## **More than ‘just for fun’**

Still, most people who I talk to only look at their horoscope for entertainment. They don’t put any stock in what it says, but are simply interested in what seems like a silly and meaningless distraction.



I totally understand that. I mean, who hasn't laughed at the way in which horoscopes pretty much all say virtually the same thing?

Really, how hard is it to just say a bunch of generally happy things about how special and unique the person reading this horoscope is and how something fascinating and wonderful is going to happen to them if they stay positive?

Retired Bishop Donald Montrose of Stockton points to two dangers of reading horoscopes "for fun." First, there is the risk of desensitizing ourselves to things related to the occult. This is a real danger. The more we become accustomed to these kinds of things, the less aware we seem to be regarding their seriousness.

Second, he notes that, while a person might often place no faith in what they read, they are exposing themselves to the possibility.

For the most part, you know that it is silly. Almost every time you read them for entertainment, you are in a place where you know that it literally has nothing to offer you by way of guidance or insight.

But if we keep exposing ourselves to them, the day will come when we might be looking for some help. Who knows when? You may be in a place where you are really stretched. Maybe it will be when you are fearful of the future and you just want reassurance. Maybe you will have a decision to make where you want some sort of guarantee that things will work out. That's the moment when our "for fun" entertainment might become something more. In other words, we don't trust horoscopes until we do.

Now, I don't want to be that guy who wants to spoil everything pleasurable in life. But I have to point this out: We are striving to be virtuous. There is nothing virtuous about idle curiosity. To be truly curious and inquisitive is a positive virtue, but horoscopes only serve to indulge what you might call "idle curiosity." Engaging in idle curiosity might not be a serious sin in every occasion, but it has led many of us to a place where we were exposed to serious sin.

Is reading one horoscope "for fun" a grave sin?

Not likely.

Will it irreparably damage your soul?

Probably not.

But if you are someone who regularly reads the horoscope "just for fun," it would be wise if you reconsidered that.

### **Our fortune in God**

Fortune cookies are, in my experience, a different kind of thing. I am only relying on what I have noticed, but I've seen more and more fortune cookies becoming less and less about fortune telling.

I don't know the last time I saw a fortune cookie that contained anything more than a clever saying or a joke (for example, "It's easier to resist at the beginning than at the end" or "Don't eat any Chinese food today or you'll be very sick!").

We have a God who loves us very much. While we all experience some degree of fear regarding the future, recourse to anything other than reason and God reveals that something deeper may be going on in our heart.

*Father Michael Schmitz is director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Duluth and chaplain of the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Reach him at [fathermikeschmitz@gmail.com](mailto:fathermikeschmitz@gmail.com).*

«

»