

ASTROLOGY: DOES IT WORK? SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?

BIG IDEA: GOD HAS GIVEN US WAYS TO FIND HIS WILL FOR OUR LIVES, BUT ASTROLOGY IS NOT ONE OF THOSE WAYS.

PURPOSE: YOUTH SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS STUDY WITH A COMMITMENT TO NOT BE INVOLVED WITH ASTROLOGY, BUT TO SEEK GOD'S WILL IN GOD'S WAY.

Research: You may wish to do some of your own research on this topic. Some of your youth may know a good deal. The more you know, the more authority your presentation will wield.

EVANGELISTIC IDEA: A topic like this is very interesting to most youth, both Christians and nonChristians. If you want to have more of a focus on outreach for this teaching, let youth know well in advance what the topic will be. Have them begin to talk to their friends about the topic and invite their friends to be a part of these meetings. But remember that if nonChristians are present, they may not believe the Bible or even believe in God. Thus, you may want to introduce the subject with a personal testimony of how God and the Bible have successfully guided you in life (get specific) and why you believe the Bible to be God's Word. Then say you will be evaluating Horoscopes and Fortune-Tellers in the light of God's Word. Don't just show them the darkness of Horoscopes. Give them a positive alternative.

INTRODUCTION

THE POPULARITY OF ASTROLOGY

SKIT: At least one week before you teach this lesson, ask some youth to develop a skit around the following theme: Peter is wondering whether or not he should invite Sam, an old friend, to go skiing with a group of friends. Sam ruined their previous trip, and Peter was afraid that it might happen again. "Maybe my horoscope will give me some direction", Peter thinks. He opens his paper and reads his horoscope for the day, which says "Today is a day for new beginnings." Peter takes this to mean that Sam may be different this time. Peter invites Sam. All goes well on the trip. Peter is now at home in his room at night and sees the newspaper again. Then he begins to reflect. Was it just a coincidence that the horoscope was accurate, or was some intelligence behind that prediction? If there is a power behind it, how do I know if it is a good power or an evil power? Of course, youth should develop the skit, add humor, make it fun!

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Astrology is getting incredibly popular these days. A 1989 survey of first-year psychology students at the University of Queensland found that 70.4% of the women and 32.4% of the men agreed or strongly agreed that they always read the "stars" columns of their newspapers and magazines. (Svensen, 1990). According to an article in Life Magazine, astrology is “experiencing its biggest boom in 400 years.” A recent poll found only 20% of Americans saying they flat out didn’t believe in it. Forty-eight per cent believed that astrology was probably or definitely valid. That’s about half of us. The vast majority of newspapers carry horoscopes. And the number of professional astrologers in the States has increased five times in the last twenty years.

Do you like to surf the Net? There are thousands of Web Sites on Astrology. You can even find a horoscope for your pet, or for Elvis!

How many of you know your astrological sign? I have to admit that I know mine. I’m a _____. Tell me some of your signs. I couldn’t help but know mine because while growing up people talked about it, it was often on my calendars, and newspapers always seemed to carry horoscopes.

Some read them only out of curiosity, but many, including some world leaders, have consulted horoscopes and fortune tellers to help them make important decisions. Some fortune tellers claim that their gift is from God. Our task over the next ___ meetings is to better understand Astrology and to determine whether or not Christians should be involved.

PRAY

During this session we will ask and try to answer the following 3 questions about astrology:

1. What is it? 2. Does it work? 3. What is God's perspective?

I. WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?

I will give much information that you may wish to ask a question about later. Keep pencil and note card handy so that you can write any questions you might have. You don't have to sign your name. (Hand out note cards. These questions could be collected at the end and you could respond to them next week. This might help to bring people back for another week. Just make sure you have the time and resources to come up with decent answers.)

A. Astrology can be defined as “The ancient art that claims to discover and interpret the influence of the stars and planets on persons or events.”

B. Where did it come from? It's not new. Astrology probably first developed in Mesopotamia, among the Assyrians and Babylonians of the seventh-sixth centuries BC. It was cultivated in Egypt and found its way into the Western Greek and Roman world. During 3rd century BC personal horoscopes became popular.

C. Here’s how it works: The planets supposedly influence people more than any other heavenly bodies. The band of stars that appear to encircle the earth is called the

Zodiac. It is divided into 12 equal parts called Signs (Leo, Gemini, Aquarius, etc.). The earth is also divided into 12 parts, called houses. These houses determine how the planets and signs influence a person's daily life.

So, one's life pattern can be charted by determining the position of the stars and planets at the time of one's birth, in relation to where he or she was born. The chart that accomplishes this is known as a "Horoscope." Are you following me?

DISCUSSION: Let's divide into into groups of 3 or 4 and give you a chance to share what you know about Horoscopes and Astrology. Each group can appoint a group leader who can share back with the large group about the results.

Questions:

- Do you know of people who claim that astrology has given them insight into the future?
- What do they say?
- What magazines and newspapers carry astrological columns?
- Do you know books that teach and recommend involvement in astrology?
- Have you ever seen astrology to be accurate? What did it predict?

II. DOES ASTROLOGY WORK?

DISCUSSION: While still in your small groups, I want to move on to a new point. Imagine that you are on your school newspaper staff, embroiled in a controversy. Several staffers want to start including an astrological column in the paper. Others think Astrology is hokey and detracts from a truly scientific based education. They volunteer *you* to research into horoscopes to see if they really work. Now here's the question I want you to discuss: How can you evaluate whether horoscopes work or not? Where could you go to find legitimate studies? Where else could you get solid information? (This may be a tough question for them to grasp. Sadly, our education tends to emphasize memorizing facts over researching and discerning truth. Little exercises like this can help youth become more effective truth seekers.)

One way to evaluate Astrology is to run around getting people's personal testimonies. You could stand at the Mall with a notepad asking, "Excuse me, Miss, does Astrology work for you?" And many could probably tell you dramatic stories of Astrological predictions which came true. At that point, some might close the case, concluding, "It works! Let's print it in our school paper!"

But hold on a minute! Every religion, every diet fad, and every hokey "miracle cure" can produce many glowing testimonies. In fact, if I told you that meditating on Barbie and Ken dolls for 10 minutes each morning had changed my life, and I convinced ten of you to try it for faithfully for an entire week, at least one of you would come back next week with a glowing testimony of a successful romance, a major problem solved, or dramatic weight loss.

Why would this happen?

Let them give some ideas. Make sure that the following two explanations come out. One is the law of averages. Something great would happen to a certain number of people every week, regardless of whether Barbie and Ken were consulted. Another is the power of belief (power of suggestion or placebo effect). If someone truly believes my testimony, they are more likely to look for some good thing to happen during the week.

If that person with the great testimony spread the word and hundreds of people became faithful Barbie and Kennites, I could print a brochure citing scores of testimonies. I can see the brochure now: “How Barbie and Ken Changed My Life.”

So, although personal testimonies have some value, we must dig deeper to get at the truth. Let me give you several other angles to think about.

1. The position of the earth has changed in relation to the stars since ancient times. So the signs of the zodiac no longer match the constellations for which they were named. For example, the constellation of Virgo is now in the sign of Libra, for instance. This should have botched the entire system!

2. There are many different astrological systems which contradict one another. For example, some argue for 8 zodiac signs, others 12, others 14, others 24. Thus, a person could go to 4 different astrologers and receive 4 conflicting forecasts.

3. It is based on the faulty assumption that the planets revolve around the earth.

4. The problem with twins. Born at exactly the same time and place, their entire lives would have the same forecast, yet history shows that twins can lead radically different lives.

5. Studies have tested the accuracy of astrological predictions. For example, a study of 2,817 musicians found that no sign of the Zodiac either favored or disfavored them.

6. Legitimate scientists attest to its lack of scientific base. In September, 1975, 186 prominent American Scientists, along with 18 Nobel Prize winners, said that there is no scientific basis that stars foretell events and influence lives. (Points 1-6 source: Josh McDowell book on World Religions.)

7. Psychology can explain why Astrology often seems to work. Professor Ray Hyman, at the University of Oregon, specializes in the Psychology of Self-deception. As a teenager, he worked his way through school as a palm reader. He amazed both himself and his clients with his accurate readings. But a friend suggested a way to test his readings? (Did any of you come up with this test in the discussion time?) He recommended telling clients the opposite of his normal reading. Hyman gave it a try. In his own words, “If the palm said that at age ten you were depressed, I’d say, ‘At ten you were elated.’ They’d say, ‘Fantastic! How did you do that?’”

As a practicing Psychologist, Hyman says that a phenomenon known as “the fallacy of personal validation” explains the puzzling results of his little experiment. The key is that the person wants to believe. They’ve actually done experiments where they give a person someone else’s horoscope. The result? The person usually sees it as a perfect match.

Other experiments found that when the astrologer’s description contradicts the facts, both the astrologer and the client somehow interpret the description to fit the facts, although

they are not aware of what they are doing. You can imagine how it could happen. Astrologer: "At the age of nine, something wonderful happened." Client: "But at nine years, my dad lost his job. It was a horrible year." Astrologer: "Strange. I wonder if something good came out of that situation?" Client: "Of course! Our temporary poverty gave me a heart for the less fortunate. That event probably led me to my current involvement in social action." And wa la! A horrible year becomes a wonderful year.

At other times, Astrologer's predictions are so vague, that the client can interpret them any way he chooses. (Point #7 source: Life Magazine, 7/1/97, by Kenneth Miller)

III. WHAT IS GOD'S PERSPECTIVE?

My studies and experiences of life have taught me to trust the Bible. In Acts 1:3 we read that Jesus gave "many convincing proofs" that He had risen from the dead. A vast amount of historical proof demonstrates that the biblical text is accurate. (See "Christianity On Trial" series) Prophecies made in Old Testament times that were fulfilled in later history also demonstrate the divine character of the Bible.

But another proof of the truth of the Scriptures is the way its principles work today. For example, in the 1960's and 70's America went through what became known as "The Sexual Revolution." People could see no reason to restrict sex to marriage. After all, there was now a pill that could keep girls from getting pregnant. And penicillin could cure sexually transmitted diseases. Why not break free from all our old fashioned morals that no longer have relevance to today? But the results of the sexual revolution have made it clear that God's way was best.

*Gonorrhea and syphilis (two sexually transmitted diseases) are the second and third most reported diseases in the USA.

*Some STD's, such as AIDS and Herpes Simplex II, have no cure.

*Rather than freedom, much heartache and suffering have resulted from America's "Sexual Revolution."

The Bible was right when it taught the ideal of committing yourself to one partner for life. As a committed Christian, I am committed to believe His Word.

So what does the Bible have to say about astrology?

A. Biblical prophecy differs from present day cultic methods of telling the future.

"But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." (Deut. 18:20-22; cr. Deut. 13:1-5)

A prophet of God is known because his predictions are accurate 100% of the

time. Read the above passage. Contrast this with the above mentioned studies on astrological accuracy.

ILLUSTRATION: *One of the most famous astrologers in America is Jeane Dixon. (She claims her gift is from God but uses such cultic helps as crystal balls and tarot cards.) But look at some of her failures:*

- a. Oct. 19, 1968 she predicted that Jacqueline Kennedy was not thinking of marriage. The next day she married Aristotle Onassis.
- b. World War III would begin in 1954.
- c. The Vietnam War would end in 1966, but did not until 1975.
- d. Russia would be the first nation to put men on the moon.

Now, look back at the Deuteronomy passage. How long would Jean Dixon have lasted in ancient Israel? (If Israel kept the command, she would have been killed after her first mistake!)

B. The Bible condemns the use of stars for forecasting the future (Isaiah 47:9-15; cr. Lev. 19:26, Deut. 18:9-14, II Kings 17:17-18, 21:6, Jer. 10:2).

“All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame. Here are no coals to warm anyone; here is no fire to sit by.” (Isa. 47:13,14)

Who can read Isaiah 47:13,14 for us? What does God tell us here about astrology? And I challenge you to find anywhere in the Bible where God recommends astrology as a way of finding His will. In fact, the above cross reference verses take us beyond astrology to condemn sorcerers, witches, and other forms of fortune telling.

"But," some will come back, "sometimes it works." But since we know that there is no scientific basis, then it must either be chance (the last 6 predictions came true, but are you now going to base a big decision on it?), the power of suggestion, or (and this is scary) have another supernatural source than God. Just because it is supernatural doesn't mean that the source is God. Not all visions are from God (See Galatians 1:6-10) and not all miracles are from God (See Matthew 7:22,23). There are forces of darkness out to deceive you (Eph. 6:11,12) that disguise themselves as angels of light (II Cor. 11:14). These forces are much more powerful and intelligent than we are, but they cower before our almighty God.

ILLUSTRATION: *A missionary named Arthur Johnston, while living in France, saw a crowd of people gathered around a person who was doing some astounding feats. He could tell a person what number was on his licence plate, when the plate was not in view. A person could hold up a book and he could read what was on the page when it was turned away from him. Johnston prayed silently that if this power was from Satan, that he would lose his power. The next person held up a book, and the man could not read it. Nor could he read license plates. The man left and*

the crowd dispersed. Since Johnson had not shouted the prayer out loud, you couldn't attribute the loss of power to anything psychological. God had simply triumphed over a lesser power.

CONCLUSION

You must decide today who you will serve: The one who came to give you life and to give it abundantly, or the one who came to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). And Proverbs 3:5,6 promises if we will trust and acknowledge Him, He will direct us.

God wants to free us from being held captive to Astrology. An interest in astrology may start innocently, out of curiosity perhaps. But in the end we find we find political leaders being swayed by such fortunes and people basing important decisions (marriage, work, health) on these predictions.

***ILLUSTRATION:** A European lady was overdue to give birth to her baby but rejected the doctor's advice of inducing labor because she wanted the baby to be born during the time that it would be an Aquarius.*

(Give time for people to pray about any commitment God may have them make, or for friends who may be enslaved to astrology. And don't forget to let them finish their question cards and hand them in.)

Suggestion: It may be good to follow this lesson with the "Life at the Crossroads" series. If so, introduce it now: Next week we will talk about "How God Guides Us." Surely God would not leave us in the dark as to how to make decisions in life. Also, next week we will respond to some of the questions you have written.

If you don't plan on following this up with the "Life at the Crossroads" series, you may want to at least give them some brief suggestions on how to properly seek God's will. Youth do want help with their decisions. You could briefly mention this outline, or leave it on their student sheet.

- 1 - Talk to God (Jms. 1:5, Matthew 7:7-11).**
- 2 - Follow the principles of God's Word (II Tim. 3:16,17).**
- 3 - Seek wise counsel (Prov. 15:22)**
 - a - Authorities (Rom. 13:1-7)**
 - b - Those who know you best.**
 - c - Experts in specific fields (Prov. 14:15)**
- 4 - Consider your circumstances and use Biblical common sense (Romans 15:23,24; Acts 14:19-21; I Cor. 16:8,9).**
- 5 - Consider your gifts and desires (Psalm 37:4).**

If God truly loves us, He has reasons for not laying out the future for us all at once. I suppose we are like an automobile moving at night, with our headlights lighting our way as we go. Our lights don't give us enough light to go all the way to our destination from the beginning. They just illumine as much of the road as I need for now. I'm glad I didn't have

responsibility of knowing where I would be now 10 years ago. Or know who wife would be. All this would have distracted me from what I needed to concentrate on at the time.

SHARPENING YOUR AX BASIC RESEARCH

Often, you will find yourself needing more information on a topic. In this lesson, I wanted to know just how popular astrology was, how it worked, etc. This information helps me teach with much more confidence and authority. It not only makes the lesson more interesting, but it makes my students think I know what I'm talking about. So where can you go to get this information?

1. Encyclopedias. Here I got an overview of Astrology.
2. People Who Know More Than You About The Subject. Do you know someone who has dealt with this issue? Not only can they inform you, but they can recommend other materials and people.
3. Christian Books. Find a good Christian book on the subject, and you've found someone who's done most of the legwork for you. Josh's book on world religions had a chapter that set me way ahead. Footnotes and end notes can lead you to other sources. Think well in advance of what you will be teaching on. Ask some knowledgeable Christians for books they recommend. Go to your local Christian Bookstore and find, not only what they have on the shelf, but what their microfiche can pull up that's in print.
4. Secular Books. By "secular", I don't mean "anti-Christian." I mean just not necessarily written from a Christian perspective. All truth is God's truth. Just be discerning enough to view their conclusions from the perspective of a Christian worldview. If your local library doesn't have what you want, ask them if they can order a book. Through Inter Library Loan, I get books, usually free, mailed from other libraries within our system, or even from outside our system.
5. Magazines and Other Sources. Magazines can give you current information, like the Life Magazine article I quoted from. Go to your public library and search through the Periodic Literature indexes. You can also find professional journals to read more scholarly studies on various issues. Major fields have their own reference sources, such as Psychological Abstracts, for Psychology literature.
6. Computer Services. I subscribe to a computer service called "The Electric Library," via the Internet. For about \$5.00 per month (if I pay yearly), I can do library research from my home computer, accessing scads of magazines, newspapers, and even chapters of certain books. I hit the "Electric Library", typed in "Astrology", and selected a couple of articles of interest to me. (Via CompuServe, Go ElectricLibrary. Through the Internet, find <http://www2.elibrary.com>.) The information is not as extensive as a really good library (e.g., you don't get the older periodicals) but it's great for getting current information fast.

ASTROLOGY: DOES IT WORK? SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?

INTRODUCTION: THE POPULARITY OF ASTROLOGY

“University of Queensland Students Look to the Stars”

Astrology is experiencing its biggest boom in 200 years. A recent poll found that only 20% of Americans flat out deny that it works. Almost half believe it is probably or definitely valid.

I. WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?

A. A Definition:

“The ancient art that claims to discover and interpret the influence of the stars and planets on persons or events.”

B. Where Did it Come From?

C. How Does it Work?

II. DOES ASTROLOGY WORK?

- 1. The position of the earth has changed in relation to the stars since ancient times.*
- 2. There are many different astrological systems that contradict one another.*
- 3. It is based on the faulty assumption that the planets revolve around the earth.*
- 4. The problem with twins.*
- 5. Studies have tested the accuracy of astrological predictions.*
- 6. Legitimate scientists attest to its lack of scientific base.*
- 7. Psychology can explain why astrology often seems to work.*

III. WHAT IS GOD’S PERSPECTIVE?

- A. Biblical prophecy differs from present day cultic methods of telling the future. (Deut. 18:20-22; cr. Deut. 13:1-5)*
- B. The Bible condemns the use of stars for forecasting the future. (Isa. 47:13,14; cr. Lev. 19:26, Deut. 18:9-14, II Kings 17:17-18, 21:6, Jer. 10:2)*

“A Missionary Versus a Fortune Teller”

ACTION POINTS:

ASTROLOGY: DOES IT WORK? SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?

INTRODUCTION: THE POPULARITY OF ASTROLOGY

“University of Queensland Students Look to the Stars”

Astrology is experiencing its biggest boom in _____ years. A recent poll found that only _____% of Americans flat out deny that it works. Almost _____ believe it is probably or definitely valid.

IV. WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?

D. A Definition:

“The ancient art that claims to discover and interpret the influence of the _____ and _____ on persons or events.”

E. Where Did it Come From?

F. How Does it Work?

V. DOES ASTROLOGY WORK?

- *The position of the earth has _____ in relation to the stars since ancient times.*
- *There are many different astrological systems that _____ one another.*
- *It is based on the faulty assumption that the _____ revolve around the earth.*
- *The problem with _____.*
- *Studies have tested the _____ of astrological predictions.*
- *Legitimate scientists attest to its lack of _____ base.*
- *Psychology can explain why astrology often seems to _____.*

VI. WHAT IS GOD’S PERSPECTIVE?

A. Biblical prophecy differs from present day cultic methods of telling the _____. (Deut. 18:20-22; cr. Deut. 13:1-5)

B. The Bible condemns the use of stars for _____ the future. (Isa. 47:13,14; cr. Lev. 19:26, Deut. 18:9-14, II Kings 17:17-18, 21:6, Jer. 10:2)

“A Missionary Versus a Fortune Teller”

ACTION POINTS: