

OpenTheo

Is It Okay to Be Part of a Music Ministry That's Led by a Professing Mormon?

April 11, 2024



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether it's okay to be part of a music ministry that's led by a professing Mormon, whether a woman should date a man who isn't as spiritual mature as she is or doesn't take his faith as seriously, and the misuse of Matthew 5:38-42 to manipulate others.

* Is it biblical for me to be part of a music ministry with a group of Christian women that is headed up by a professing Mormon?

* Should a woman date a man who isn't as spiritually mature as she is or doesn't take his faith as seriously as she does?

* How would you interpret Matthew 5:38-42 in the context of a friend who could be manipulating and taking advantage of you for resources?

Transcript

I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Cogle, and you're listening to the hashtag STRAskPodcast from Stand to Reason. Amy. Hi, Greg.

Alright, Greg, here is a question from Marie. Is it biblical for me to be part of a music ministry with a group of Christian women if the group happens to be headed up by a professing Mormon? Would this be considered being unequally yoked? Well, what's throwing me here is music ministry. So where is this ministry? You know, is it associated with a church? If it's associated with the church, they have a leader in the church who's not a Christian, who's actually a member of a group that is hostile to Christianity.

No, I'm going to qualify my words. Obviously, most LDS are not hostile to Christians, but Mormonism is hostile to Christianity. In fact, this is really clear, and you know more about this than I do, Amy, but when Joseph Smith got his alleged visions, he was seeking the correct denomination, and the angel Moroni, was that the angel? Whatever, the

angelic vision communicated to him that all of the denominations there in Palmyra and New York were abominations.

These are all Protestant denominations, and the gospel had been corrupted and he had to restore it, and that was the whole genesis of Mormonism. So Mormonism is meant to be a restoration of the gospel in light of the fact that all the Protestant denominations and other Christian denominations don't have the true gospel. So they are ideologically hostile to each other.

They both can't be true. They have totally different sets of beliefs. So how is it that a LDS music leader is involved in the Christian ministry at some, I presume, local church? Maybe it's just a group of women that, you know, like a band of some kind.

She doesn't mention a church, that's why I say it. Oh, I see. Okay.

Well, it says she does use the word ministry, right? Right. So in some way, they're doing ministry as a group. Yeah.

I don't think it's unequally yoked. That notion has to do with being actually yoked together with a non-believer. That is, you are attached to them in some way where the non-believers' behavior and contrary ethics, or maybe theology, I guess, in this case might draw you off the path of what is right.

And so we're not to be yoked together with a non-believer in that way. So certainly this would apply to marriage. It may certainly apply to different, some certain types of business relationships where your ability to make choices is compromised by your partnership.

And the partner then has the ability to draw you into sinful activity. But I don't see how that's the case here. It's just a music thing.

And here's the music leader that's leading music and presuming that the music is all appropriate and theologically sound, which isn't even the case in many Christian churches, then I don't see any prima facie on the face of it concerned. Certainly about being unequally yoked. What do you think? Oh, I have a different view so she can listen to both and figure out.

I think if you are doing ministry in a group together, that if there's somebody in that group that has a different God in a different gospel, there's no way to do ministry with that person. If she had just said we're in a band together, that's one thing. But this is actually a ministry which meaning that you are spreading some sort of message about the truth, about the gospel.

But here's someone who thinks God is the same kind of creature as we are. That we're just on our way to becoming exactly like God because we're the same kind of being as

God. And just to describe their gospel, I'm sure I've told this story so many times, so hopefully I haven't told it recently on the show.

But they have this book called Gospel Principles where they use this book to teach in their classes. It's an official book of the church. And inside that book, they have a parable that explains the gospel.

And the parable goes like this. There's a man and he owes so much money that he can't pay. So he goes to his creditor and he falls on his knees and he asks for forgiveness.

And the creditor is saying no, but then Jesus comes and he says, I will pay. I will pay his debt. Now that is our gospel, right? So far, so good.

We're exactly on the same page. But then Jesus turns to the guy and he says, and now you owe me. And I will set the terms and you will follow the rules and pay me back.

That is the difference between the gospel and a law that you can never fulfill. That is not good news. And if you have a false gospel and a false God, how are you sharing a ministry together? And I think of the passage where I'm trying to, I think it's in second or third, John.

You can correct me if I'm misremembering that. But he says, you know, don't accept these false teachers when they come. And I can't remember if that's where he says, don't even eat with them.

And the idea wasn't, you can't be around them. The idea was you're not supposed to be helping them on their way as they're teaching their false doctrine. So in the same way, I don't see how you would avoid encouraging her ministry and false doctrine.

If she's part of your ministry and you are, you know, basically you're in ministry together. The people know that and they know she's a Mormon. I just, I just think you could lead a lot of people astray that way.

Well, that's a good point. A lot depends on the nature of the leadership and this group and everything. So, I mean, if this is a group in a local church, then the group, in my view, at least can still be doing ministry, even though the leader is not doing ministry because the leader is not Christian.

It may be that all of the music is not, none of the music is in question in terms of what they sing and whatever. So the impact can still be there. The ministry impact can still be there.

Even if one individual, even the one who's leading this, is not actually a regenerate Christian, and has false beliefs about God. It would be the first time that's happened for sure. Well, certainly not unregenerate, but at the same time, even false beliefs.

Yeah, this would happen even within Christian context, apart from LDS concern. I guess I'd want to know more detail about the role this individual is playing in the so-called ministry, what this ministry actually amounts to and where it's domiciled or attached to. Is that free-floating ministry? I don't know why she would call it a ministry, even.

That's just a lot of ambiguities here for me. Well, hopefully that gives you some things to consider, Marie Ann, applied to your specific situation. Let's go into a question from Samantha.

Should a woman date a man who isn't as spiritually mature as she is or doesn't take his faith as seriously as she does? I want to marry someone who will be a spiritual leader, but don't want to reject possibilities who are genuine Christians who may not be where I am yet. Well, I certainly appreciate the sensitivity to this issue, and the fact is there are a lot of women who are married to men that are not their spiritual equal. In many cases, the wife becomes a Christian first, and then maybe the husband is not a Christian.

Sometimes the Christian woman marries a non-Christian man, which is not a good idea, that would be unequally yoked, but then non-Christian man ends up becoming a Christian but then ends up lagging behind. I know people in circumstances like this in the past, so I think that this is a prudential concern. The fact that Samantha understands that there is a hierarchy here of responsibility and that the husband is to be the spiritual head of the household is really important.

It doesn't mean that she can't be more mature than he is, I don't think, as long as she's willing to allow the husband to lead at the capacity in which he can lead. And be an encouragement to him. It doesn't mean that she can't make contributions, obviously, or bring information to the table or offer thoughts or whatever, as long as she's not usurping his authority as a leader.

So I think there's a liability there, but sometimes you kind of have to work with what's available, and the saying is that the best is always the enemy of the good. So you hold off for the best, best, best, best, best, and then you don't get even the good. And so you might have a different view on this, but I think that there's a certainly nothing wrong with marrying a man who is not at your spiritual level of maturity.

The scripture doesn't speak to that, what it speaks to is the kind of the authority structure, spiritual authority, a structure in the family. Yeah, I would say if you respect him and you can follow his leadership, that's the key, even if he's not as mature as you are. But I also think these are two different things.

One, not a spiritually mature, and two doesn't take his faith seriously. I think those are two different things. The first one, I would say, he doesn't have to be a spiritual mature.

If he's not taking his faith seriously, I think that's a bad sign. I probably wouldn't date

someone who's not taking it seriously, because you can take it seriously and be a new Christian and be starting out and just becoming more mature, but you're on a path. Well, I would go further, and this is one of the... I got married when I was later, I had my 48th birthday on my honeymoon, and one of the things that was important to me, especially being involved in full-time Christian work, was that I just didn't want somebody who was a real Christian, but I wanted somebody who had staying power as a follower of Jesus, had a track record, so that I didn't have to worry about this person defecting somewhere down the line.

Brand new Christian, all excited, and then the hardship hits a year into the marriage, and maybe a year and a half or two years into their relationship with Christ, and then it's like, this isn't what I signed out for, and then they're out. And you want to see holding power, that's really important. No, you can't always have that, that's more of an idea, but that's something you want to look for.

Okay, let's go to a question from Beth. Hi there, I'm wondering what would be your interpretation of Matthew 538 through 42 in the context of a friend who could possibly be manipulating and taking advantage of you for resources. Should there be bounds to Christian love in the material sense with someone who won't help themselves? Well, the answer to that last one is yes, there should be boundaries, and I've never heard a Christian leader who has said otherwise.

Not only that, there are scripture, and I was just reading in two passages. I kind of stumbled upon this because I have a hard time remembering where I sat, but it seems to me it might have been in the book of Galatians, and maybe, and I was just kind of cruising through. But this passage that I'm thinking of, and the other one that's in 2 Thessalonians, speaks to the responsibility that Christians have to provide for themselves and for their family.

And one of the passages says, if any man does not provide for his own, he has denied the faith and he's worth worse than an unbeliever. Okay, and- Are you thinking of the 2 Thessalonians one? If anyone is not willing to work, then he's not to eat. Well, that's another passage that's parallel, that has same concept.

If you don't work, you don't eat. And so if there is somebody who is trying to extort money from you, a brother in Christ, say, and because he's not willing to bear his own load, and Galatians 6 does talk about that, that each one to bear his own load. We bear each other's burdens, but we bear our own load.

So when the burdens get excessive, we come alongside. But the load is what we are responsible for carrying each of us ourselves. And I certainly have known, I can think of one individual in particular, that just a real conniver, in fact his nickname was the snake.

Everybody knew him as the snake, because he was a conniver like that, okay? And

always taking advantage of other Christians for his own benefit. And that's where I think it's appropriate just to say no. And the boundaries are, you ought to provide for your own, et cetera, et cetera.

But this passage here is a difficult one. Matthew 5, Jesus is talking about, if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat. Also, whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him too.

Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him, who wants to borrow from you. I actually don't think that's an unqualified command. I don't know how to spell it all out right here, partly because this whole thing about taking your shirt and giving him your coat, I think as I recall, there's some kind of cultural thing that Jesus was making reference to.

And this is the same passage that actually begins with it to turn the other cheek. Exertation. And the idea there, at least in that verse, is not to personally resist evil done to you.

Okay. Because the verse above it says, you have heard an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Well, that's a principle of justice actually.

That means the law, I should say the punishment should fit the crime. You don't have a person who steals a loaf of bread and then you cut his hand off. Okay.

There's got to be a proportionality between the punishment and the crime. And that's where it comes from through the law. But what people have been doing is they were taking that as a, as a, a justification for personal vengeance.

You did this to me so I can do it back at you. And of course Jesus teaches you don't return evil for evil. That that was a justice of, I'm sorry, a principle of jurisprudence in the law, not a principle for taking individual revenge.

And that's what Jesus was, was speaking to there. And then following that verse is, has to do with not resisting the evil person. You know, it slaps you on the, on the, on the house.

You put it, you're right cheek. Now most people are right handed. So how do you slap somebody out of another person's right cheek? That's cross from you.

All right. The way you do it is with a backhanded slap. But that's an insult.

And so the point here is, I think Jesus is saying when somebody just, you know, insults you, you don't return evil for evil. You just let it go. Okay.

And that's the kind of evil he has in mind there. Actually, when Jesus himself was slapped at his trial, he didn't turn the other cheek. He demanded an accounting.

If I've done something wrong, bear witness to the wrong. But if I didn't, then why did you slap me? Okay. So, and even Paul did something similar, but not as artfully when he was also before the Sanhedrin.

And so it's clear from that that Jesus is not making this broad, pacifistic kind of appeal here. So then this brings us to the next verse, which is one that I don't resist. Rather, if someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him, who wants to borrow from you. And I think that what this is probably speaking to is an attitude of personal selfishness.

It is not speaking to the circumstance where somebody's trying to extort or pressure you out of funds for illicit reasons and through illicit means, like the snake from my past. I don't think that's what he's speaking to there. I can't provide a lot more contextual material, but we do have these other passages that seem to speak to the responsibility of others carrying their own load, for example, and providing for their own.

So I don't think that pushing back on people like that is a violation of what Jesus has in mind here. There are some people who manipulate a Christian's desire to be compassionate, to try and get them to do what they want. And it's a terrible thing to see something good twisted by somebody who's skillful at getting what they want for people and taking advantage of their desire to have compassion.

And as Christians, what we need to do, we need to understand what true compassion is. True compassion is not giving people whatever they want. It's seeking their good.

And the ultimate purpose of doing someone good is not to give them resources. It's to actually help them. And so if somebody is pressuring you for resources and it's illegitimate, and it will harm them, because if they get used to that, they're not going to take care of themselves or there's some other way they're manipulating you and this is illegitimate, then the truly compassionate stance is to not give them what they want.

And that is the hardest thing to do because they will make you feel like you're the worst person in the world. And this is where we have to be strong and stand on what true compassion is and that is doing what is best for that person. Even if they hate you for it, even if everyone else misunderstands you and hates you for it, you do what is right and you do it for the good of that person and you don't give into manipulation because that's not good for them either.

So anything else to say about that? That can't believe how fast that episode went. There's probably more in this passage in Matthew 5 than I've been able to offer, but I just offered what I had. All right.

Yeah. So just remember, ask what is the good that needs to be done here and how is it

best accomplished and it might not be accomplished by giving them what they want. All right.

Thank you, Marie and Samantha and Beth. We appreciate hearing from you. Send us your question on Twitter or X. There I go.

Twitter. With the hashtag SDRAsk or you can go to our website at str.org. This is Amy Hall and Greg Coco for Stand to Reason.