



It Takes Bold Moves to Make a Big Difference

Guest: Dr. Susan R. Madsen

Shelley Hunter: You're listening to the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. I'm your host, Shelley Hunter. This is where we talk to people who have seen the hand of God in their lives and particularly in their careers.

Welcome to episode 42 of the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. I am excited and honored to share this next interview with you, but I feel compelled to reintroduce myself before we start.

My name is Shelley Hunter. My former married name is Kukuk. Though fewer and fewer people call me that these days, I never mind it because that is the name that connects me to my kids and my bonus kids. Being their mom and stepmom will always, always be the unparalleled highlight of my career, and second is the additional relationships that being their mother has brought into my life, such as amazing sons-in-law, friends, teammates, and just some amazing people who have come into our home over the years.

The second thing you need to know is that I'm an all-in member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though I was inactive for most of my 20s and early part of my 30s, becoming a mom prompted me to reinvestigate the church, so I could decide once and for all whether to raise my kids in the gospel or not.

Now, if you've listened to earlier episodes or read my workbook, you know the back story there, but I share that much now simply because, first, I think it's why I have such a soft spot for teens and young adults because I know how hard it is to navigate that time in your life alone and more importantly though, for our purposes, I want new listeners to know that I strive to ensure this podcast is doctrinally aligned with the church while also talking to people of other faiths and discussing hard topics with my guest if that's where the interview goes.

Now, the focus of my podcast will always be career-related, but life experiences do shape our careers. As you learn in this podcast, a career is so much more than what you do to make money.

I could say more, but the star of this episode is my guest, Dr. Susan R. Madsen, so I want to leave time for her.

I believe I have read a few things by Dr. Madsen over the years, but I really got to know her virtually by listening to her podcast called, *Unleashing Sister Saints*. Dr. Madsen is also an all-in member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Additionally, Dr. Madsen is considered one of the top global thought leaders on the topic of women and leadership. She's authored or edited several books and has published hundreds of articles, chapters, and reports.

I expect you'll hear her name more in the years ahead because she has just launched an initiative called, A Bolder Way Forward to address the high levels of domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and gender-based discrimination in the State of Utah.

Dr. Madsen will explain more in the interview, but I start this off as I always do by asking the question, what is it you do for a living?

Here's Dr. Madsen.

Dr. Susan R. Madsen: That's a big question. [chuckles] I actually have many titles, but one of my main paid work, I should say, I'm the Karen Haight Huntsman Endowed Professor of Leadership in the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business at Utah State University. Whoa.

I am a professor. I've been a professor for a couple of decades. I actually went back full-time to work when my youngest was 6 years old. A big part of my time right now, though about 14 years ago, I started the Utah Women and Leadership Project for the State of Utah. Even though, in my role as a professor, I have studied women's leadership. That's what I'm a scholar of, women's leadership for years and years. I still do global work. I published lots of books, eight books, and actually submitted another scholarly book. I've written a church book and a workbook for the church as well, but I studied all kinds of things more globally and nationally on women's leadership.

Again, 14 years ago, I was asked by the commissioner of higher education, the governor's office to do some research on why more women in the State of Utah were not going to college and graduating because we were below the national average. That really led me into what was supposed to be a one-year project or a two-year project, but it led me into really be in the founding director for 14 years now of the Utah Women and Leadership Project which takes most of my time.

I am teaching a seven-week course right now too, but it takes most of my time. The mission is to strengthen the impact of Utah girls and women. We do the hub of research on all topics girls and women. I do speaking 3 to 10 times a week, a lot in Utah context and really leading change.

We've just started something called, A Bolder Way Forward to really help shift things for girls and women in the State of Utah in very righteous and faithful ways, I have to

say as a very engaged active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

That's where I'm at right now spending most of my time in my career topic. Although, sometimes we argue in academics about what career means because I would say, "Everything I have done including bearing four children have been part of this career that I've had."

I do want to say one more thing, Shelley. Right now, it is during the summer, almost summer, so I'm not in contract. I don't get paid for my next three months, but I will be working nonstop for the next three months.

My point is I really work above my paycheck. I work in the community. So much of what I do even though it's in the space of strengthening the impact of girls and women, I just have everything together. I have paid work, community work, family, all the things in one ball of wax. I don't know if that's a good metaphor to use here but-- That's a little bit.

Shelley: I feel the exact same way. When we say career, I think people tend to think of what you get paid to do, but it's so much more than that. Tell me how you got here. Before you were Dr. Madsen, what did you think you were going to do?

Susan: Oh, my gosh. That goes back to the early days. I was actually raised in a home with a father who is a Seminary and Institute teacher or director of an institute. I was raised with six brothers and a very traditional home. My mother never worked for pay. She stayed at home. That's kind of what I was expecting to do. However, I really loved watching what my dad did.

We moved when I was young to Northern Idaho and he started institutes. He was this entrepreneur and he would use his mind. He'd designed homes in the day too. He would design new buildings. He did all of this stuff and I found what he did super fascinating and interesting. I felt my self always wanted to be on the edge of learning and growing. My mother was also a learner too, even though she didn't finish her degree. I just went in that direction.

One thing when I was 14, I had my patriarchal blessing, and it talked about how education was going to be so critical in my life. I watched, at 8 and 9, my dad go back for a master's and then we moved from Northern Idaho during the summers, two summers to BYU when I was 15, 16, so my father could finish his doctorate. That was in the back of my mind. Then my patriarchal blessing talked about that I would have the energy and drive and passion to continue my education throughout my life. In the back of my mind, even though I was in a traditional home, I always saw that I needed to get my education. My dad's example was in my mind.

I think they thought I was going to just get my bachelor's, but then I did my master's between the second and third kid and then I got my doctorate.

You know, I was always driven to teach and organize things. I was thinking honestly, Shelley, when I had my first baby, that all of a sudden, I would just enjoy being at

home and it just didn't kick in for me. He was really a hard kid. He still is to this day. [laughter] They said in the hospital a couple of times, this is a wild child. [laughter] He still is. He still is. He's 36 almost.

Then I honestly stayed home a couple of years. I had a baby, 18 months. I was kind of in depression. It was situational depression. I knew that I had to do things differently than anybody I had seen in my life that I had examples. I knew at that time, I didn't want to work full-time with little kids, but I knew I needed to continue my education.

You know what, Shelley, when I went back, the day I went back after we got out of my husband's master's degree, two master's degrees, moved to Portland, Oregon, went back to school the first day I went back to school with two little boys, I totally shifted. I came back that night, and I started talking to my husband, I was like, "Oh, my gosh. All of these wonderful things happened. I'm learning this and that," and he cried, and he said, "You're back. You're back."

Shelley: Oh, that's so sweet.

Susan: It had been a couple of years. I knew at that point that what my head, heart, and hands needed to do was find a path that was different than any woman I had seen. That I needed to have my mind going and my heart going, and then work part-time, and did the kids and did the various things.

That's a little bit of my background, but I tell you, even into my master's when I did my thesis and all my topics were around women and girls, like pregnancy and exercise or different things like that, they just connected with my heart. They just felt like, you need to do this. I started even back then and had a couple more kids, but then knew I would get this doctorate degree, so I started that when my kids were 3 to 11 and then finished three years later. I'm very much a driver.

Shelley, I have to say, even when I started my doctorate, I didn't think I would work full-time. I'm like, "I'll probably teach now." I'd been teaching in the evenings once a week or something, but one last thing is through every single decision to go to school to do all the pieces I've done. I have been on my knees and sought guidance from God and felt I've learned how to use the spirit in so many different ways and how my head thinks and how my heart feels in what I yearn to do. Sometimes you yearn to do things and you can't, but then you figure out, maybe it's not either or maybe there's a space in between.

Like I joined a YMCA board and that filled some unpaid work, filled some of my needs and I just had to shake things up, but I will tell you, God needed me to go back to school and spend those years in school. God needed me to be able to, when my youngest was six, say, "You know what? I'm going to be a faculty member and I'm going to work full-time, but I'm going to have a career where I can work at home. Most days I'll be home when the kids get home and be there in the transition, and it's all messy, Shelley, life is messy. [chuckles]

Shelley: It is messy, but purposeful too.

Susan: Yes. Even if you don't have everything figured out you need to prepare for a future. This is the title of my book, *For A Future Only God Can See for You*. Those paths, those pieces of my patriarchal blessing, there were more things that said I was going to speak and do the things that I'm doing right now, but I didn't know how that looked, but you just know that next step. Listening to your head, like, "What is going on in your head? What do you find super interesting to think about and what you're feeling and then what you like to do?" That head, heart, and hands, I talk about a lot, I just listen to that.

Not that I'm in this big great place now, but I have moments every week where I am absolutely humbled and grateful that I listened to God to get back to my education, to even do part-time work here and there. I just taught a class here and there, but then I realized that was part of my career. I actually stayed in my career the whole time and I didn't realize it, because I've said, "Oh, this is just a little work here and there." That doesn't count.

Actually, every single thing I did, including unpaid work, being on a board, a couple of boards in my city of Highland, California, actually, that was part of my career too. I get that humbled place when people tell me I'm making an impact in their lives, that gratefulness that I was able to listen to God and to do things that were outside the box for many women. I'm in the church specifically because I could not have the impact now, I'm just going to say it, tomorrow, I'm 62, at 62 unless I'd spent the last 30 or 40 years doing little pieces of work or service in ways that have led me to the work I'm able to do today.

Shelley: It's amazing. It really is. I want to go back to two pivot points for you. When you decide that you are going to go back with your education and you've got these kids, how does the family adjust?

Susan: The family adjusts all the time. [laughs] In my life, it adjusted all the time. I still was able to, and I had the privilege of choosing to work part-time. Some women do not have that privilege of having a partner who earns enough to pay the rent or the mortgage or whatever it might be, so I just want to acknowledge that. I had the choice to do that.

I actually always did primary caregiving through my degrees. I had childcare some, but not that much. In my master's degree, I taught piano lessons for someone in my ward. Actually, a couple people helped me during this time. We did it in trade for childcare as I went to some of my classes, and my kids loved being with their kids. They both ran childcare and so we would just trade, and so they loved it more than just being with me, so a couple afternoons a week.

Then with my doctorate degree, it was interesting during that time because my kids were in school, but my youngest was like three so I would drop him off at preschool, go and do some paid work for a company. Got paid very well. It paid for my-- just for a few hours and then could work at home, but then also it paid for my whole doctorate degree. That little bit of work I did on this side.

Then most of my classes were in the evenings, so nap time was very powerful. I've always been an early riser. I would run the kids here. I would get them off to school. I'd read the scriptures, do things. Then I went to school one or two evenings a week, but I always coached a lot of sports so I could have the coaching and the games on days that I wasn't in school, so I would run the kids around. It was kind of messy. When you talk-

Shelley: [laughs]

Susan: -about how did your family adjust, it was just a part of life. My husband was very supportive. I still did the most of the work. It's flipped now. He does most of the work. I have a busier schedule, but we don't have kids in the home, and so as a partnership, we adjusted. He did most of the evenings, then we coordinated that. I did most of the, I'm just going to say it, emotional labor though.

Shelley: Yes. [laughs]

Susan: Sometimes people say, "How do you do it all? That just sounds like so much." I would say-- I have said back to them, how could I not have? For two reasons, one is because my mind is much better when I have plenty to do than less. I have to be busy. Two, how can I not do it? I tell you the exact timing of my degrees was exactly how God needed me to do it. You look at what has happened and where I've developed and been, and the timing of doing specific things that again, humbles me to know that I listened to God enough to know that I needed to jump in, even though people criticize me and the church.

"Why are you doing that? Why are you doing a doctorate degree with four little kids? You don't really need that. Why do you do that?" My response through the years has been this. I just lean right into them, look at them in the eyes, and said, "Because God told me to." You just do what God needs you to do. Sometimes that means stay at home during certain parts, full-time. Sometimes it means, "Hey, teach a class in the evenings, be with your kids during the day." Sometimes it means going to work full-time, and again, sometimes you don't have that choice. You are not as privileged as I in that regard that I've had a good man beside me in this whole process.

Shelley: Yes. You sure have. I appreciate so much that he recognized that you were a better version of yourself once you were re-engaged in your own, I'll call it career, but education and just the things you felt called to do.

Susan: He has always acknowledged that. In fact, our kids have all been out of the house for a while, but six or seven years ago, he went back for a doctorate degree in global leadership so that when we moved forward in the career, he wants to be able to not just carry my luggage when we go global. He can contribute. He did his dissertation on male allies for women, and so he's a good man.

Shelley: That is amazing. I imagine that he might have faced some criticism too.

Susan: He could have. He has never shared any with me, but that's a good question. He was not raised in, his mother was a Latter-day saint. His father was not,

his siblings were not active. He went on a mission and did those at the influence of other people. His mother still did the emotional labor, but I don't think he had some of that heaviness that I had on my shoulders that women should do this and men should do this.

I had this big thing on my shoulder that good Latter-day saint women do these things, and so we push ourselves to do all of this, plus this, plus this, and then try to swing it. Some days it didn't work so well. My kids would be the first to tell you that, and some days it did, but through it all I have a piece that I did what I was supposed to do to prepare for the work I'm doing right now.

Shelley: I love it. If somebody's listening and they're thinking, "I need to do something." What advice would you give to them?

Susan: I would say, shift yourself out of the either-or mentality. We have that in the church really and in Utah, you see that in other places too but we have it really strong in the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints where you just do this or this. We found this in older data on if you're in college and then you had a baby, you had to drop out of college, so it's all about the baby; or if you get married-- We have this either or, and it's really not that, that's not the healthy place, that we can have a baby and we can continue school.

Maybe that doesn't mean full-time school. Maybe it means part-time. Maybe it means an online class during that semester. Maybe it means you find a job where you can work at home for five hours a week. There's so many options or maybe it's not paid work but you jump into a humanitarian project. We do stuff in the church but there's other things too that are needed.

That would be a huge piece of advice and I had to do that in my life is to back up and say, this is my life, and as I partner with my partner, if you have that partner but especially with God, how does that look? If you don't let your mind open, then you can't get inspiration. If you only have one specific way that you're thinking about doing life, you can't get inspiration. You're not asking the right questions, so I'm saying just shake it up and say, what if I did this, this, and this, and maybe I want to be home with kids full-time. There is high depression rates there, so what would it take? Maybe it's an institute class that you jump into. I don't know, just shake it up and think of things.

If we're thinking we have high, honestly, I'm just going to say it, cosmetic surgery rates and some body image issues in the state that show us we need to keep our minds focused outward in using our gifts and skills, developing them, and then using them to lift other people. I'm not a fan, Shelley, of the term seasons. "This is your season. You do all of this or all of this." I'm like, you could swing a little bit.

Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother want us to find joy in every season of life and that means doing what they and our Savior tell us to do what promptings. I've really grown through the years and opened up my mind in terms of it's critical for women to just think and understand their own minds and hearts and their own gifts and

strengths so that they can know how to contribute in more meaningful ways in the workforce, in their career and beyond.

Shelley: Yes. I always say we think in terms of A or B, but God is so much more creative than that. The CDEFG is going to be amazing if you just consider it, or ask him. I don't even know what it is but show me, give me something. Then when that email comes and says, "Hey, would you be willing to?" I think maybe I would, I could make this work.

Susan: That brings up another thing. I'm always telling women to go back to school, finish your degrees, do something. I've had women come and say they've been wrestling for years, whether they should go get a master's degree, and then how I'm probably not smart enough. I'm not this or that and I'm like, have you actually sent in an application? Have you sent in-- It's like, no, they've been wrestling. I'm like, you can't say yes. You can't say really. You can say no but you can't say yes, so I'm like, even if you're not 100% ready, send in applications for this or that because you can then choose to say no, but you don't have even any choice if you don't move.

Shelley, I'm moving all the time. I'm like, okay, this-- If it shuts down, if someone says, if I even get an inkling, contact this person or this person or do this or this or invite this person, I don't feel fence at all if they don't, I'm like, okay, I just wanted to make sure I did what came to my mind because I feel like that's the revelation. Some have said, oh my gosh, thank you for reaching out. That helps us thicken our skin too.

I've had people that have done one application and got rejected and quit. Do you know how many rejections I've gotten in my life like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds because I'm out there all the time. It doesn't faze me anymore if people say, "Oh, I don't like that idea." I'm like, "Okay, that's fine."

Shelley: Yes. That's super good advice. When my daughter was thinking about going on a mission, one of her friends said to her, you can just open the portal, just talk to your bishop, and then keep asking the question, am I going in the right direction? Am I going in the right direction?

Susan: Exactly.

Shelley: We don't have to decide and taking the steps sometimes helps you either refine the thought you're having or really get the no and think, okay, then let's try another door.

Susan: Yes.

Shelley: Can you tell me about a leap of faith you had to take, something super scary that you did anyway?

Susan: Well, I think all of the things I've been talking about are leaps of faith. Just knowing and believing that you're doing the right thing. When you get into a doctoral program or a master's program, a big leap of faith is just the point that I decided to

have kids. So I think if I would've known more especially with that first child, I would've worried a little bit more because that was hard from pregnancy to every piece of it was hard but I learned a ton.

I'm still learning from that kid, so I think all of those things people worry a lot about, is that inspiration or is that just my own thinking? Recently, probably my biggest sleep of faith is that I really got some revelation around the end of October and into November to start take my Utah Women in Leadership Project, worked to the next phase, and it's called A Bolder Way Forward. I got some really strong inspiration and it's huge.

By mid-right before the holidays, I decided this is the right way. I kept filling in the promptings and I'll tell you, I'm in the middle of that. We're launching a next month and getting funding and moving hundreds and it will be thousands of groups and organizations and tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of people in the next seven years. That's huge.

Shelley: What is it?

Susan: It is A Bolder Way Forward for Utah girls and women in our state and I do some of this work globally as well but we have high levels of domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, gender-based discrimination. We're the worst state for women's equality. We have low levels of women leadership. There's a lot of concerns here in terms of security and safety, in terms of education, in terms of workforce kinds of things, health, maternal mental health issues and I've been working and doing research on all of these areas and trying to move the needle, but what we know is the needle is not moving.

What I realized with this inspiration and things I was reading is if we stay with even doing so many pieces and parts, the way we're doing them, trying to move things, it's still going to take three to four decades to make any notable progress. We have higher than the national average domestic violence, sexual assault, and these kinds of things and I'm like, this is not God's will. This is not acceptable.

So this stuff that came to me-- I have read many books but the last one I read that really motivated me was *How Change Happens*, why some social movements succeed while others do not, and it just came to me that even though we're doing so much stuff, we haven't been working together as a system. It's really in each of these 18 areas, abolderwayforward.org is where you can get to that. I have now been working for months to bring leaders together that will coordinate and bring all of the pieces around domestic violence or any of these other areas together.

I'll tell you, this is no small thing. Scott Anderson from Zion's Bank went to the legislature for me, was able to secure the funding needed to move forward. I just kept moving forward instead, if it's God's will, I'm going to do this, but there are just forces joining daily in this work, and it's the right time. First of all, people don't do what I'm trying to do, moving the entire state forward, so this state is-- It takes an ego, so people tease me some time I have pretty, a lot of confidence but I have confidence in myself that I can figure it out by asking people even if I don't.

I will tell you, I have confidence in God. If God is telling me to do this, I can not do it. I have to do it. This is big and it's bold but it will shift things and help through not just my own effort, but thousands of people that will be engaged, including the whole Utah PTA system who's on board in Intermountain Healthcare and University of Utah Health, and so many other partners, the United Ways and Chambers and different things. Through everybody united, we will see movements and lives will be saved.

I feel humbled by that, but also it continues to be this leap of faith that I trust that those feelings are from God, first of all, but then I trust that my head, heart, and hands can actually do that work. I also feel that heaviness of responsibility. That's a heavy load when you're sitting through and talking for hours about the high levels of child sexual abuse in this state.

I'm in way too many meetings about that. It's a heavy load, but I'm anxious to include anybody that wants to be part of stepping forward and leading and putting some of their work towards making this place a place where women, girls can thrive. That means we're lifting families too. We're lifting boys and men at the same time. It's not scarcity, it's an abundance mentality. This is lifting families, and to be able to do that in a space where we understand the doctrines of the church of Jesus Christ, Latter Saints, and of our savior is an important place to be as well.

Shelley: I actually really love it. If I can summarize one part of it, I think what you said was there's so many good people in the state that are trying to do stuff, but it's all disparate. It's all over the place, and you're saying, let's get together.

Susan: Yes. It's really the systems model of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. You can do a lot of pieces and parts and they're good and we still need to do that, but we don't need duplication. We need to be able to get resources out in different ways, but it's how can we, together, let's map out in each of these areas what's going on. Bring people together, be more strategic. Where are the gaps? How do we get information to more people in more areas around the state? How do we help more women understand their advocates?

If they even take their child to the doctor that makes them an advocate, how can they use their voice to help us decrease domestic violence in the state to help us make sure that women are getting paid what they deserve? We have a lot of women who are single moms and the pay gap does impact women in the state of Utah. That's what we're saying is, let's bring together all the goodness and the efforts and the ideas even, right?

Shelley: Yes.

Susan: Of women, you're like, have these ideas on how do I do things for girls in my neighborhood? How do I help them understand confidence, and that they can see themselves as leaders. That they can see themselves as strong girls. How do I do that in my own neighborhood? Sometimes people think about that all the time and they think maybe I don't have what it takes to do that, or I don't know how to do that. Actually, you do, you have what it takes. You can do it.

I used the word unleash a lot. Unleashed meaning not tied down, not in a dog leash, but unleash meaning even within myself, how do I just unleash myself to think, wow, I could do this. I can use my voice. I can change things. I can make other people's lives better. Bringing it all together is it's messy work, but I'm saying instead of 2, 3, or 4 decades, let's take between now and 2030, which is seven years with the checkpoint in 2026. Three and a half years first and then another, let's see if we, in this model of working together and collaborating, can change things.

I think we don't have a choice for our daughters, for our granddaughters. I have one granddaughter and my daughter's pregnant with two babies, a boy and a girl. I'm thinking about my little Hadley, she's four. I'm like, we have to have a better Utah for her. I need to not be worrying about her being abused, being raped I'll just say that, her not being able to use her beautiful voice and have an impact and her beautiful brain and have an impact in ways that can help and lift others, and contribute in so many other ways. I don't think we have a choice, Shelley. We need to do this.

Shelley: You're being so candid that I want to ask you a question candidly because I think there are some people that would say, it's the church's fault that all that is happening in Utah.

Susan: We get that quite a bit. It's interesting because a lot of people don't know the data. My work in the Utah Women and Leadership project, if you happen to be a listener in Utah, just know we have data on everything or else we're in the process of that from, or one last week was on mammography rates and we're very low. We are 49th of 51 on preventative healthcare for women in the state. We do research on all of those things. There are a few things we do better, but most things we're really below.

Now people ask why. Actually, the data tell us that more generally, not in every situation, but generally speaking in more religious, not just Latter-day saints and more religious and conservative cultures, you tend to have more of these problems.

There was a massive study about the wage gap done a couple of years ago on wage gap and religiosity. They did states, compared them, and then countries. In every case, if you were more religious and conservative, you are going to have a bigger pay gap, because there tend to be less women in politics, higher fertility rates, but even that wasn't as impactful as the other two. That was you have women in less, less political power and you have higher sexual objectification with more religious, you look on the outside.

It seems like it should be opposite. Anytime you have a power dynamic that is different in bigger ways between men and women and in religious contexts, including my own religion, you do, you have a power dynamic between men and women. Doctrinal and cultural sometimes are different, and anytime you do, there's this tendency, hence all these warnings in general conference and all the things we do, there's just this tendency to take that power and abuse it.

That's what we see a lot. I love being a Latter-day Saint woman. I love it, but I also believe we have to look at reality. If we're not aware, we can't do anything to change.

We want to be a religious culture. We want to do what God needs us to do, and we want to protect our families. We want to protect our children. To do that, we have got to stop hiding and being silent about some of these issues that are really hard to talk about.

I know the woman in Utah whose son last week was murdered by his father, and she worked for 15 years with the courts in Utah trying to get them not to make her send her son every week to his father-

Shelley: Oh dang it.

Susan: -when she knew he was being abused. We've just not dealt with that. Finally, tragedy after tragedy in this state to about domestic violence, we'll need to shift. That's what it takes. Don't know how I got off on that one, Shelley. That's a heavy topic.

I will tell you that cultural element, we love so many things about the church and the way we do things, but there's this piece that if we're not open to learning and growing about hard things, and changing what we're doing, that these trends will continue. What I will say is the trends are unacceptable. They're unacceptable to being human and living, but they're unacceptable to God, and he needs more of us to just take it on, be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Using our voice as women in ways that maybe we would've been silent in a word council, or a state council, if we are set apart to be a relief society president or a leader, it is part of our responsibility to use our voice because that's what we're set apart to do and that's why we're in the meetings.

Shelley: Then tell me about an unexpected blessing. You've elaborated on the challenges and you're up for the challenges and you've been prepared for them, there's no doubt, but what's an unexpected blessing? Just something you couldn't see for yourself.

Susan: I think that the blessings of, even the last couple of weeks getting emails, just seeing the work matters. I know people would think by now, I would know that. Sometimes it's hard. I work long hours and I have a lot of responsibility that I, even with me, I lose that, is this work, but that's been an unexpected blessing, but I will say a real practical one.

Even though my daughter's going through some challenges with having twins. Aw, what an unexpected blessing. [laughs] I just have two grandkids from two different families, one from each, there's been some fertility issues as well, but getting two more in three months or something, I'm delighted. I love my two little grandkids and enjoy spending time with them.

That's an unexpected blessing. I'm glad she has to do the pregnancy work. Can I just get to be the grandma?

Shelley: Totally, you earned it too. [laughs] Well, you've really answered this already, but my last question is how have you seen the hand of God in your career? I guess I'll add for you those people who are listening and thinking, I don't ever get that inspiration or whatnot. Maybe you could touch on that too.

Susan: I have seen the hand of God and everything that I have done through the years. I didn't see it during some years that I was doing childbearing though, because I really had problems with pregnancy and I really had all kinds of issues. I had contractions, I was on bed rest for two kids, and all this stuff. I didn't see all of that until I had that last kid.

I was on bed rest for six months, and one of my doctors said something that, because I couldn't even go into labor, the first ones, and what I had this moment of aha or inspiration was that the only way your body kept in those first couple of kids is because it wasn't working right. That it was because of some of the issues that I was even able to keep these kids. If I was on the plains, I would've died with the first one.

Shelley: Wow.

Susan: I even that it took till later to figure out that. I don't know. I think I have learned and I'm still learning about how to hear inspiration, but I move pretty quickly now. I really use the stupor of thought as much as the warming and feeling in your bosom. I really do the stupor of thought. I move forward on things constantly, and if it just goes away, if there's a stupor, it's not right. I'm not going to keep going down that path. I'm going to take that step back and go in a different direction. I don't stand still very much. I do pray, but I move and then get my aspiration that way.

Sometimes I do something and it doesn't work, but I think in those moments, maybe something happened that has shifted the way I see things, and now I'm ready to go in this other different direction, or maybe those contacts were helpful for them. I guess maybe it's because of age that I quit second-guessing myself. I'll tell you that I do feel that hand of God in the work I'm doing. I wish I would've been more astute younger.

Those younger folks listening, I went on a mission and I knew how to, but during those childbearing hard years of little toddlers running around, I didn't have all these deep insights at that point. I [laughter] was just fairly getting up in the moment and knowing that I was doing the right thing and knowing when I got pregnant that third time, because my first one was so hard and then had these two busy boys, knowing that I did feel that inspiration, I needed to have a third. Then I had one more, but I cried after I had the third. I've got to do this one more time. My husband said, "No, you don't." I'm like, I do, I do, and then I just knew that was it.

I knew that I needed God even in a way that may not be healthy. I needed to please God. That was so important to me and I just felt that closure that I've done beyond what I could do. Hopefully, that's good enough. I did feel it was good enough. I don't know, but I've beat myself up in other ways. I'm not [laughs] perfect. I've got lots of work to do.

Shelley: [laughs] Well, to bring it full circle, you talked about the career being the big ball of everything, and if you've had not been a mother, you would've missed a big portion of the ball because it sounds to me and I can see that as strong as you are, you're also so tenderhearted that mothering in you wants to help all the children in Utah and all the moms and the boys and the men too.

Susan: I love it.

Shelley: Thank you for being on this show with me. I really appreciate it.

Susan: Thank you. Thanks so much.

Shelley: [music] There's so much that I want to say about this episode, but I'll just be brief. First, When I listen to Dr. Madsen's podcast, *Unleashing Sister Saints*, I often shake my head in agreement like we're best friends and I'm right there with her. It's a real treat for me to be able to actually talk back and ask my own questions and really learn from her. She is so smart, wise, grounded, and real. I appreciate her being so candid in addressing hard topics to affect change.

Second, in a world that can be so divisive and critical of people and organizations, I'm inspired by Dr. Madsen's desire to do more than just talk. She's using her years of training, her career, everything that went into building that career. Remember that big ball and as she says, use her head, heart, and hands to make a difference. It's a big task, but her approach feels both logical and guided to me. To use her words again, even if you think the task is too big or change is too hard, how can you not try to change things? My daughter lives in Utah and probably my grandkids one day too, so I'm in.

If you're in the state of Utah or you know someone who is, please help publicize and get the word out. Share this podcast, if you will, or direct them to abolderwayforward.org. That's A-B-O-L-D-E-R wayforward.org. Anyway, like I said, I could go on, but I'll just leave it here by saying thank you to Dr. Madsen for all she's doing, for being willing to share her time with us. Thank you for listening.

Thank you for spending time with me on the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. I hope you will discover one story at a time that God cares deeply about the details of our lives, especially something as important as using our talents and abilities to support our families, serve others, and build up his kingdom on this earth. If you are a stay-at-home mom who feels inspired to stretch yourself professionally, visit faithfulcareermoves.com to learn more.