



Jo Saxton: ([00:03](#))

You have these gifts, you have this talent and you have the desire to make your impact on the world.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:12](#))

You're listening to, The Faith & Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:22](#))

Hi, and welcome to The Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institutes director of public engagement, and I'm thrilled to be with you today. One of the highlights of hosting this podcast is talking with leaders, thinkers, and innovators whose work inspires and challenges the way I think about my own life and work. And if you haven't heard our recent lineup of guests, it's been amazing. We've had a chance to talk to recording artists, Sho Baraka, former Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, and thought leader Russell Moore. And today's guest is no exception. We'll be speaking with a thought leader whose work and influence I have long admired, Jo Saxton, who's an internationally known speaker, author and leadership coach.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:03](#))

Jo will be joining us remotely as a speaker at Women Work & Calling, our annual event for women leaders hosted here in person in Denver, or online worldwide Saturday, October 23rd, prior to launching her initiative to support women who lead, Jo was an accomplished leader in her own right, heading international ministries focused on church-based discipleship strategies. And she's graced the stages of major conferences nationwide. Among many books she's authored, her most recent is Ready to Rise: Own Your Voice, Gather Your Community, Step Into Your Influence. And in our conversation today, you'll get a glimpse of some of the wisdom she'll have to share with us at the upcoming women's event. For listeners that may not be familiar with your story, tell us a little bit about your background.

Jo Saxton: ([01:48](#))

Yeah. I'm sure like you and many of your listeners, I've worn a lot of hats over the years, often all at once. And so I'm a Brit. I grew up in London in England. I'm Nigerian by heritage. My parents moved to England in the sixties. Professionally I have been in church ministry. So I was a youth pastor, a college pastor, a church planter for a while. I worked with hearing impaired students at college over the years. I have chaired a nonprofit and since moving to the states, and now I am a speaker and podcaster an author, and I host, well, I'm a leadership coach. So within the context of coaching, I have a digital platform for women leaders, host leadership intensives for women leaders, things like that.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:35](#))

Yeah. I've loved having a chance to experience some of your leadership coaching. So that's been a treat for me. You really have become a powerful, very so preeminent voice for Christian women in leadership. And I'm wondering what professional path led you to that particular focus?

Jo Saxton: [\(02:50\)](#)

I think it hit home. I think it's been building over the years, to be honest. I'm sure all of us have an origin story of our leadership, don't we, and the focus and the things that are most important for us. And I think what hit home for me that caused me to narrow my focus were a number of experiences that would recur over the years. And there was one, and as I described this, I'm actually describing an amalgam of the same thing that happened where I'd be speaking at an event in the U.S., this happened more often in the U.S. than in the UK, but it did happen there and Australia, too. I'd speak at an event and I was often the only woman speaking. And I was often the only black woman there, but I was often the only woman speaking. And then in the break, when you go to the bathroom, you meet up with people there and people start asking questions. And asking questions about how you got into what your field and what you've learned, and did anybody mentor you?

Jo Saxton: [\(03:43\)](#)

And it happens the first time and it's just a great conversation. It's just a chat. It happens a couple of times and you're like, seriously? And the third time, and I thought, you know what? Women are worth more than a conversation in the bathroom. Their leadership and they're calling, and they're mentoring, and they're equipping and empowering is worth more than the five minutes they can catch when they apologize for interrupting you just to find out some key things that will help them propel their leadership. And so some of it was taking it out of the bathroom into real life, really, and into the rest of our lives. And I realized that the women that I was encountering had no access to people or information or conversations, and or they weren't in environments that cultivated that. And it was costing them in terms of their leadership. It was definitely costing them in terms of their pay, hugely in terms of their pay. I'm just going to underline that again.

Joanna Meyer: [\(04:40\)](#)

Tell me more about that while you mentioned that. What were you noticing?

Jo Saxton: [\(04:46\)](#)

I was noticing that sometimes women were feeling so grateful to be given the chance to lead in some sphere or another, that they didn't negotiate pay. And out of that sense of being apologetic, they didn't negotiate in the light of their skills, their accomplishments, their qualifications, their vast experience. And almost the gratitude to be in the room caused them to automatically low-ball themselves, and not do the research to find out what was commensurate for their experience and qualification. To not think through what they were committing to, and the long-term ramifications of constantly low-balling yourself. And I find myself... And also there was a kind of taboo about talking about money. And I realized that that left a lot of people poorer. And when I say people, I actually mean women, poorer for it. And so I would begin to say, well, this is how much I got paid for this event. And they'd be like, seriously?

Jo Saxton: [\(05:47\)](#)



I mean, and I mean, they were literally Jo, they were literally conversations that I'd had with other leaders where we'd be speaking at the event and I was paid five times more. And I mean, that's not cool. That's not cool. Or that the package around something was more. And I would notice that across the board. Now my field was nonprofit leadership and in church leadership, but I was hearing it from my friends in the corporate spaces. I was hearing it from people who are looking to build connections in all kinds of fields. And I thought, this is a problem. And it was this default and this fear of being arrogant and this fear of being presumptuous that was impacting. And I said, we've got to remember that when we're talking about our pay, we're talking about how we're supporting elderly family members. We're talking about our kids going through college. We're talking about paying your mortgage and your bills, and as well as your worth, just your intrinsic worth. And I found that it became quite gender specific, the sense of fear about asking about these things.

Joanna Meyer: ([06:51](#))

Yeah. It's a fascinating thing. As I was reading your book *Ready to Rise*, there were a number of themes that just stood out to me that resonated both with my own experience, and as I've done more and more research into women's leadership. It's a common experience for women. And one of them is really understanding and owning our influence, which I think plays out in choices like choosing to negotiate your salary, but from what I have experienced and observed in women. A lot of women's leadership journeys are aligned with that internal battle of self-doubt of criticism, of feelings of disempowerment. And it's not unusual for women to quietly be asking themselves. And I too much, or what if my ambitions don't look like what I see in other women? Does that mean that I'm wanting the wrong things in life? What have you seen in women's lives about not fully understanding and owning their influence?

Jo Saxton: ([07:40](#))

I mean, I think what you've just highlighted there in terms of people asking you if they're too much or not enough is huge, and people hiding their gifts and calling it humility. I've seen a lot of women waiting to be discovered and doing so by doing more work than needed, overworking, putting themselves in positions which have left them vulnerable. Always taking the notes in a meeting, always getting the teas or the coffees. In a heart for service, and hoping that someone would turn around and look and say, look what this woman brings to the table. And actually what's happened is, they just assume that she likes making coffee or they just assume that she likes taking notes. And it actually hasn't been the... It's like, they're playing one game, but there's a different game that exists in the context of the place that they work.

Jo Saxton: ([08:29](#))

And so they're not stepping into their influence because they're hiding it, and they're not giving voice to it. And that can leave us burnt out, resentful, bitter, confused, insecure, and makes it hard. And it almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, not because we planned it that way, but because if you continually feel marginalized and forgotten, and that there's no space for you, and you get up to everyday and you look at new job opportunities and assume that no one's ever going to want you, then you begin to act in



kind because you don't live beyond what you believe to be true about yourself and it's tragic. It's really tragic.

Joanna Meyer: ([09:03](#))

That phrase haunts me, that you don't live beyond what you believe about yourself. And I have sensed that in so many women. As I was reading, *Ready to Rise*, I sensed that you were writing to women that had the potential to lead powerful God honoring change in their corners of the world. But that those women hadn't really risen to their full influence yet. As you interact with Christian women, what other factors did you see that really motivated you to write this book?

Jo Saxton: ([09:30](#))

I think there were a couple of things. Like you say, seeing women who have earth shattering potential in many spheres in business and in church and in creatives spheres and any sphere, and thinking when we don't, when we don't live into our influence, what price are we paying? What price is society paying? What price are our communities paying? We believe that the gospel is game changing and life changing, and that we live in the light of that, and that God given influence creates a better world for human flourishing. And we're not serving that purpose when we're holding back those gifts. And when we are hiding those gifts, when we're not living into those gifts. So some of it was a big picture.

Jo Saxton: ([10:18](#))

If we are part of God's great commission to represent him wherever we are, wherever we're working, as accountants, as teachers, as doctors, wherever, if that's where we are, but we're not owning it, it's like we're neutering potential here. And so I think that was a huge thing. And I think it's really sad to see. It's just really sad to see women who don't realize how awesome they are, how gifted they are, how talented they are, how there's a complicated relationship with ambition, a degree of self hatred about their own ambitions. And in the meantime, that business isn't being started. In the meantime, that initiative, which could help a community isn't happening. In the meantime, all these other things that... There's a gap there. And I think we suffer for the gaps of when we haven't catalyzed a woman's contribution.

Joanna Meyer: ([11:12](#))

Yeah. It hurts all of us not to see both women and men fully engaged and using their gifts for God's glory. Going to read a quote from the book, because I always just love how well-spoken and well-written you are. You said, "If there was ever a time to uncover potential invoices it's now. Now is the time to boldly and authentically represent God's goodness in the world, living as channels for his transformative change in power." And that's hope. That was one of the reasons why I want to do to be a speaker at Women Work & Calling this year, is that we need that kind of voice and that vision.

Joanna Meyer: ([11:43](#))



One thing I've appreciated about you is that you really do bring a tone of authenticity to the voice that you use as you lead. But that's something that a lot of women struggle with. I think women leaders may struggle to have themselves heard whether that's in the workplace or if they're leading in a ministry setting, it's a figurative and a literal thing. It's an ongoing challenge for a lot of women. What do you think you mean when you refer to a woman's voice?

Jo Saxton: ([12:10](#))

When I think of voice, the original word for voice in the Latin is, comes from Vocare. And it includes a number of things, but includes vocation. And it's our identity. When I think of voice, I think of our identity and our gifts and our skillset in action, our passions in action out there either through our words, but also through our ways and through our works. Through all the ways that we live and function and move. It's our perspective. It's our talent. It's us living into our purpose.

Jo Saxton: ([12:45](#))

So when I'm thinking of a woman's voice, and I think in our current context, some of that literally is spoken. I mean, it literally is saying what matters, giving a different lens, giving a different insight. But I think it is bringing our full self to bear and in our leadership spaces, because it does shape it. When we show up fully, that sets culture, that creates culture, that defines culture. If we don't show up fully, we don't do it. And so our voices need to be activated so that we are creating and participating in healthy cultures and our workplaces.

Joanna Meyer: ([13:19](#))

Yeah. I love that. The idea that our voices are a God-given identity and purpose in action. Why do you think it's so hard then for women to feel like they're heard?

Jo Saxton: ([13:31](#))

I mean, sometimes because they're not. I mean, sometimes it's hard because it's not a feeling, but its-

Joanna Meyer: ([13:36](#))

It's a literal reality, yeah.

Jo Saxton: ([13:37](#))

Some of it is just, the quick answer, misogyny. I mean, it is something that if they have been in context where a woman's voice isn't welcome and they've encountered that, it's hard to get up from that kind of bruising again. It's hard to be in workspace after workspace, after workspace, where your views are minimized, where you're objectified, where you've been abused or where you've been overlooked or ignored. So I think that some of it is quite direct, but there are also the indirect ways as well that have impacted and made it hard for women to step into their influence and own their voices. If you don't see yourself very often, I mean, one of the things I'm struck by as an outsider to the states and as a Brit, is



we have had two female prime ministers over the years. My childhood, and it didn't matter what political party, it wasn't even about that because it's not a two party system anyway.

Jo Saxton: ([14:30](#))

But my childhood, I saw a woman in the most influential position within society, whether you liked it wasn't the point, she existed, it existed. And there is something about what we see in terms of what it validates and what is possible. I remember doing this thing on Instagram a while ago, just listing names of women in the Bible and just putting it as a post saying, these are women's stories. And I had a number of people slide into my DMs and say, a number saying, are these women real? Because they'd never heard them spoken of at church. They never heard about them. Others saying, it's really frustrating to realize that there were women like me, there was a business woman. There's a Lydia, there's a Deborah who really was a judge and I've never heard her story.

Jo Saxton: ([15:19](#))

So I've never seen my gifting, my talent, my contribution, my skillset as integrated into the purposes of God. And I think when we don't see it, we're just like, am I allowed? Is it okay? Is this good enough for God? And because often what we hear are things which are fine to do, but might not be what our gifts bring. Is there a place with a woman in a church community when she is traveling on business? When she is a CFO? When she is an entrepreneur and she's busy or an investor or whatever? How do we engage her? How do we engage her beyond her financial contributions to the life of the church? Do we celebrate what she does?

Jo Saxton: ([16:07](#))

Do we celebrate who she is? Do we say, this is one of our key people out there making a difference? Look, you want to bring that woman up in prayer. Or do we only see her in relation to her marital status, her childbearing and or not? You know what I mean? When do we recognize her? And if those things are part of what we're used to, sometimes we don't step into and understand our God given influence. It's like, it happens out there and our faith is somewhere else. And the two don't combine or we don't know how they combine. So we're just like, well, I'm doing it, but I don't know if it works. And we just haven't had, we don't see many integrated pictures. And I think that cause, when you're just not sure you just don't do it.

Joanna Meyer: ([16:47](#))

Yeah. It's really fascinating. I've grown up in the church and pastored kids. So I've been around church ministries for a long time. And when it comes to women's discipleship, there's a colossal gap in talking about a woman's whole life. Almost all women's ministries focus on really good things like knowledge of God, experiencing him in our personal devotional life, our relational colleagues to marriage and family and friendship. But rarely is there a vision for women's influence in the world as part of an intentional church discipleship plan. And so the combination of an absence of teaching on that, and in some circles, maybe even a discouragement, you may hear stronger messages about what women are not supposed



to be doing versus what they should be doing or what they're invited into. And so the fruit of that is that you have hesitancy, you have a gap. You haven't realized that your ambitions and your giftedness are part of God's purpose in the world. And it shows when women are hesitant to step into the voice that God has given them.

Jo Saxton: ([17:46](#))

That's so true.

Joanna Meyer: ([17:50](#))

I have a question for you. Why do you think men struggle to hear what women have to say?

Jo Saxton: ([17:53](#))

I think there are multiple reasons. And I think in some ways it would be best to ask the men why they struggle. In the spaces I've been in when I've seen that happen and I've heard from the guys I know, sometimes it's been a, if I don't know what to do about it, I don't know what to do about it. For some, it has been out of their own theological framework that they've struggled to listen, because they've not thought the woman's voice was the one to listen to. I mean, it's just as simple as that. There's a comfort level of always surrounding yourself with people like you. It makes collaboration easier because you think you're all on the same level. And we actually haven't celebrated difference. We haven't actually celebrated the power of collaborative difference in what that does. I mean, how that brings out greater creativity and things like that.

Jo Saxton: ([18:48](#))

So I think it can be harder to hear if our mindset, if our paradigm is when it's, when it's the same, it's better. When we've defined that as the norm and everything else as an aberration from the norm, then it has a different value space. If we're not used to being led by women, or if the only women were used to being led by our own mothers, then we may not know where to place this voice, this woman, this contribution necessarily. But I mean, those are the things I've heard from some of the people that I know. I think in many ways that the biggest answer to that question best comes from the men themselves. And I think it's a question worth them asking, saying, this is part of your story, why do you think it might be?

Joanna Meyer: ([19:31](#))

Yeah. I want to hold on to that thought because I've been really encouraged by men and the Denver Institute community who've said, "Joanna, I really want to see the women that I work with, or that work for me thrive. I just don't know how to do that." So in just a second, I'll ask you a little bit more about that, about what men can be doing to build these collaborative relationships. But I want to touch on the theme that we've asked you to speak about at Women Work & Calling. And that is the idea of helping women discover the power of relational networks and why that's so critical. And so I wanted to know, why do you think this is a challenge for so many women?

Jo Saxton: [\(20:08\)](#)

I think there are multiple reasons, but one of the ones in this current era I've seen is because a lot of our leadership is operating in the space of created scarcity. And what I mean by... I hear people say, there's no such thing as scarcity. And I'm like, tell that to the person who doesn't have anything. Do you know what I mean? It's like, don't tell me there's no scarcity when there's only one woman or one person of color or one token gesture, one disabled person in that space, because you've created scarcity there. Because if we believe, if we genuinely believe that men and women are made in the image of God, then we can assume that there are gifts and talents and abilities abounding. So there is an abundance, and which is why I'm saying created scarcity rather than actual scarcity when we create and create by default or by intention, environments, where there's only room for one, I think that puts us under pressure.

Jo Saxton: [\(21:03\)](#)

So what you find with what I've observed with women leaders is they're like, there's room for two of us, there's room for one of us, that's room for three of us. And there are 40 of us all quantified for this role. 40 of us. 40 of us with the training, the skill set and the gifts and the talents to do this. 40 of us who have really legitimate reasons why beyond the role, this job could change our lives, could get our kids through college, could pay off that student debt, could fix the car, which is frankly, a walking trashcan. Could do all of these various things. 40 of us, but there's only two roles and roles like this don't come up every day. So how do you collaborate with that woman? Because she's automatically a threat and she's not just a threat to you and your gift, she's a threat to the opportunities that you have worked very hard and tolerated all kinds of crap for to get to this point.

Jo Saxton: [\(21:57\)](#)

And so I think some of the problem is what I call music, I mean, it's a game of musical chairs. It's a game of musical chairs where you are running around the proverbial table and there is room for one or two of you. But there are 40 of you running. And all you can do is run as fast as you can and try and be in the right spot when the music stops. And then it goes a different direction. And you do the dance of working twice as hard, trying to be better, trying to look right, trying to be right, and trying to not be too argumentative, trying to be a bit passive, trying to act like you're useful. All of these things, all games around the table, so that when the music stops, hopefully you're the one who gets the job.

Jo Saxton: [\(22:37\)](#)

And you know what, when I was a kid, we used to play musical chairs, and the music would stop and everybody tries to crash into the seat and they collide. And the best you can hope for, if you don't get the seat is some crumbs under the table. And in the midst of created scarcity, we don't often ask whether that's what we're worth. And whether that's what that woman's worth. And so it's understandable. It's completely understandable that a lack of collaboration happens or collaboration only happens to the degree of our comfort. So you can collaborate with me, but don't you dare be a threat to the opportunities that I have. You can't cost me. And the problem with collaboration, the problem with that



posture for men and women is actually collaboration to do well, does mean a divesting of power in some way. Does mean some kind of a sacrifice in some way.

Jo Saxton: ([23:28](#))

So when we're afraid to do that, when we're afraid to build those kinds of relationships, because you're both hearing about that one opportunity flying by, that game of musical chairs at that company, or that game of musical chairs at that church. I mean, it's not a surprise. It's not a surprise why they... Sometimes these opportunities, both opportunities or sponsors, those are like unicorns. And the unicorn has wings and gets even more rarefied the further up the ladder you go. And I think it takes, it requires courage from us and security, courage and security from us to operate in a different way. I really do. I think it may cause us to have to do something which is counter to all of our impulses to build relational networks in a way that can be effective and not just, not purely a girl gang.

Joanna Meyer: ([24:29](#))

Yeah. It's an ongoing, it's like a conviction that it matters. And then a daily practice of fighting those emotions that might push against you being brave and being generous and connecting with others.

Jeff Haanen: ([24:44](#))

Hi, I'm Jeff Haanen founder of Denver Institute for Faith & Work. And I would like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50 or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institutes, ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you as a monthly partner, you will receive a welcome box. You'll have exclusive access to private, digital content, personalized vocational coaching and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit denverinstitute.org/give or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer: ([25:31](#))

You had a description of something called, the great woman theory, which is powerful. And I wondered if you could tell us a little bit about that, because I think that affects women's leadership too.

Jo Saxton: ([25:42](#))

Yeah. Basically it was a gender take on the great man theory, which is from Thomas Carlyle, who was a Scottish philosopher historian kind of thing. And he basically had this view that history was built off of significant individuals. The biographies of history, basically the story of history is basically great men. Great men who were super naturally gifted, incredibly talented and they marked the time. And obviously it's a theory often disputed because people are like, yeah, but there are movements around those people. There's a civil rights movement around Martin Luther King and others. There's a whole anti abolitionist movement, an abolitionist movement around William Wilberforce and that people like that. But it struck me though, when I was thinking of women leaders, how we can default to our own great



woman theory, and where we feel to justify and to be able to lead to the degree that we have, we have to have it all down.

Jo Saxton: ([26:47](#))

We have to be perfect. And I mean, like Mary Poppins, practically perfect in every way. That is the answer, and not need everybody else. Because if we have somehow imbibed for all that we've read about, all we've read from Brene Brown, we somehow still in by vulnerability as weakness and not strength, that we can't afford to be vulnerable to be taken seriously. There can't be a gap in the armor anywhere. And particularly if we are believers as well, because we're not really sure we should be doing this anyway. So we better be good at everything to make sure no one's suffering. So our family life has to be down. Everything's got to be perfect. And we keep on absorbing all the roles, all the roles, all the roles, all the roles and being excellent at them all. And it burns out not surprisingly, because no one person's designed to do that. And also it stops us from thinking about teams.

Jo Saxton: ([27:40](#))

It stops us from thinking about community and how we lead and grow as a village. And I think if we are not sure, and I think one of the other problems when we don't have relational networks and when we don't have access to leadership, we often don't recognize and realize that leadership has always happened in community. It's always happening community, but we believe the lonely journey. One of my friends often describes it as women leaders often like orphans. So they don't know how to parent anybody else up because they didn't encounter it themselves. They're like, I'm not actually sure how I even got here. I just know I'm here so all I can tell you is you work like crazy and maybe you too will get here. And again, it's another version of that great woman theory. And I just think we'd have to dismantle it thoroughly. Thoroughly dismantle it rather than, you have to break up with the overachievement addiction on this stuff to be able to move forward.

Joanna Meyer: ([28:30](#))

Yeah. Yeah. Or you can be a real jerk to the women who come behind you because you think there's not enough. There's not enough influence to go around. And so I've got to hold onto my own. Can't share it with you.

Jo Saxton: ([28:40](#))

I mean, and I have seen that again and again and again, where we intern people for way too long, for as long as it serves us or we see that person and we see how popular they are with the people who we have worked dang hard for years to get respected by. And now she walks in and she's got her, I don't think so. Do you know what I mean? It's like, I don't think it's going to work my way because I've worked hard for this, I've sacrificed for this. I've been patronized for this. Someone has patted me on the head like I'm a pet for this. So, no, she is not coming through.

Jo Saxton: ([29:12](#))



And I've seen it again and again, where there is just the buildup of resentment because of a thousand cuts to the heart for a woman who has... The whole thing about breaking through glass ceiling is you still get cut by glass. You still get cut by glass. And so no, when the next generation walks in through air, some people aren't always happy about it because they're like, hold on a second. I'm bruised, bandaged and bleeding. And you're saying, it's a great time to be alive. I don't think so.

Joanna Meyer: ([29:44](#))

As I'm listening, Jo, I'm thinking that if I was a guy that was listening, I'd be like, whoa, I had no idea that this is all going on under the surface for women. Because I mean, to be honest for all of us, you don't know what you don't know. There's so many areas of life where I just think, I've never experienced what someone else has. I've never walked in their shoes. And so I don't know. I'm clueless about what their experience has been like. I think about that relates to my understanding of race or class. And I do think it applies to gender. And so for men that may be listening, thinking, whoa, there's a whole lot here that I didn't know about. Let's invite them into the conversation for a second. As you think about, well meaning Christian men that genuinely want to see their colleagues or their sisters and ministry context thrive, what are ways that they can be empowering women's leadership?

Jo Saxton: ([30:38](#))

Yeah. I mean, I think there's a multi-pronged approach over a long period of time. And I say that because otherwise, because it's not a formula, there's a process. And so I think one of the great leadership skills that all of us as leaders are always seeking to develop is that we lead by listening. And I think there's lead by listening and observing. So I'm going to start with listening to observing, and then I'll think of some practical things. When I say listening, is there a way that you can hear from the women in your department, workplace and them safely be able to tell you what their experience has been without fearing consequence?

Joanna Meyer: ([31:16](#))

Amen to that.

Jo Saxton: ([31:18](#))

Without fear. And you may say, they may not fear. Can they say they don't fear consequence? And not just your wife. Yes, include your wife because no reason to ostracize her, but I have heard many of, my wife or my kids are fine. Well, there's a whole other dynamic there. So, and I would encourage you if you can, if you can listen to women of different age groups, different marital status is a huge one, different ethnic groups because women are not a monolith. And in some ways, part of the listening is a data gathering, of data gathering, of data gathering, of data gathering, because then you can see contextually, what are the gaps? Is it people feel there's a lack of opportunity? Is it people, whether it's a survey or whether there are people who feel like, I could tell you directly.

Jo Saxton: ([32:19](#))



And it might cause us to have to do a bit of soul searching as to whether someone could feel like they could be utterly frank with us about things. So that'd be one thing. Then I think for all of us as leaders and our self-leadership, we have to observe our skillset. So I want to ask you, in the things that you celebrate and the stories that you tell, are any of them women? If you're in a church and you have your series is the only time a woman has mentioned on Mother's Day and Advent? Because if so, that has consequences in terms of what someone perceives is available, possible, et cetera, et cetera. When you tell the stories of success and the things that you value, do all the heroes look like you? Do any of the heroes look like them?

Jo Saxton: [\(33:06\)](#)

Because language creates culture. And it's worth us thinking of what we've inadvertently created and are there ways we can bring in stories? What are the jokes that people get away with? What are the stereotypes? You know what I mean? And in our observation, when you think of the people you recommend people should read or listen to, the podcast you recommend. The books, are they all guys? And again, I'm not saying those guys aren't great to listen to. They are. It's like what Chimamanda Adichie talks about with the danger of a single story. It's not that it's inaccurate, it's incomplete. You have it incomplete [crosstalk 00:33:47].

Joanna Meyer: [\(33:46\)](#)

Describing it.

Jo Saxton: [\(33:47\)](#)

It's an incomplete picture. So those are some internal practices, and this is why I say it takes time to think through. And then I think wherever we are as leaders, if we are wanting to give opportunity to other leaders, we know at some point it involves a divesting of power. It just does. So I want to ask, what access and what pathways and pipelines have you created that these women leaders can thrive? Because if it's the same as the guys, chances are, they may not thrive. Because there are different things. Are your meetings at times of day, which aren't always feasible to people, to everybody that you'd want to raise up? Do you need to, I know you may have said, well, I've encouraged people. I've encouraged people from the front.

Jo Saxton: [\(34:34\)](#)

I've encouraged people that can come and talk to me any time. Would someone feel safe doing that? Would they feel it's appropriate doing that? If everything in the culture has always looked like a white guy, then don't be surprised if that Latino woman doesn't automatically think this is a place where I can flourish in my leadership. Even if it is, even if it is, don't assume she's going to assume that. She might think, well, this is just kind of for you guys in the same way. When guys look at a Beth Moore or someone who's written a book, and assumes it's for women, when it isn't necessarily. It's just a woman who wrote it.



Jo Saxton: ([35:09](#))

So I would encourage us to think through, what are the access points? Do the women that you want to see flourish have access to the same kind of leadership input, the same quality of leadership input? Do they get to be in the room where it happens? And do they get the things that are taught, but also the things that are caught? If they don't play golf or whatever the thing is that you do, how will they get the nurture, the networking, the opportunities that the guys around you may get? I remember one thing my pasture did for me one time, he, I think I must've told him that day I was just sick of being the only woman in the room.

Jo Saxton: ([35:50](#))

I said, I'm just tired of it. I'm tired of it. And I remember one of the things I really appreciate that he did is that he used his network to find a woman leader. And then he said, look, can I send Jo up to you for the day? And his thing was, I know that there are things I don't know. And it wasn't anything to his ego or to his leadership ability to say, I don't know the best thing for this situation, but here's what I've got. I know I've got clout and I know I can leverage what I have to make sure she has access to leaders who can invest in her, because that will only bring greater success to our team. And so it may be rather than you feeling, rather than you than defaulting to a great man theory of your own and feeling that you're meant to do all the right things, say all the right things.

Jo Saxton: ([36:38](#))

Do you know what I mean? Tiptoe around every situation and all that kind of stuff. I would say, how can you leverage your power? How can you leverage your networks to give those women access? Because you will still get the credit for that, to put it bluntly. They will still recognize that you were somebody who was secure enough and was intentional enough, and saw their potential enough that you would leverage your networks to make sure they had access to the kind of leaders that would bring back something for your team in some way. And so I would encourage not to feel like we would have to limit ourselves to only what we know how to do, but to also the networks that we have as well. Those are just some starting points. And then I would say rinse and repeat. This is not a one-off. Rinse and repeat. [crosstalk 00:37:21] You got to ask yourself-

Joanna Meyer: ([37:21](#))

Oh, go ahead.

Jo Saxton: ([37:24](#))

You got to ask yourself, what's the plan and is your plan working?

Joanna Meyer: ([37:27](#))

Yeah. And realize that our goal is to really see anyone fully, women, men, people of color, people who maybe have had limited access to economic opportunities that can move ahead, really creating opportunities for them to grow. It means consistently, consistently, consistently working at it until we see



better representation in that. Would you call the women in our community to action, to really step into what God has for them?

Jo Saxton: ([37:51](#))

Yeah. I would say, we just talked a lot about what men can do, but I don't want you to feel like there's nothing you can't do or should be doing. A number of us have waited to be chosen. Do you know what I mean? And this isn't American Idol where we get picked. And yes, there are structural things we can do. We can do blind auditions or do you know what I mean? Doing all those sorts of things, which even out the playing field. But we still have a responsibility and we still have an opportunity. And so when I say responsibility, I'm not saying that to bludgeon us into doing something. I'm simply saying, you have these gifts, you have this talent and you have the desire to make your impact on the world.

Jo Saxton: ([38:39](#))

So I want to encourage you to almost check yourself before you check your context and say what that male leader is or isn't doing. And that I want you to check yourself and say, where have you hidden your gifts and called it humility? Where have you left your God-given gifts unwrapped? And to face that, and there may be trauma around that and all kinds of things. If that's the case, then it's time to get a counselor. It really is, because you're worth the healing. And then I would encourage you to say, let's start taking steps. Let's start dreaming again. As we are in this terrible, terrible valley that has impacted the world and the workplace and disproportionately women, and then disproportionately again, women of color. We need your ideas. We need to rebuild well. Men and women flourish, because we're better together.

Jo Saxton: ([39:27](#))

So don't hold back now. Now is the time. Now is the time for you to heal. Now is the time for you to rest if you burn out with a view to coming back when you're ready. Now is the time to getting the sponsorship and the mentoring or the coaching that you need. Now is the time to invest in your gifts. Now's the time to tell someone to tell that boss what you want to do, and the impact you'd like to make. Now is the time to advocate for yourself and other women. Now is the time to build a network, whatever it is you're feeling nudged about, the time is now to respond to it.

Joanna Meyer: ([39:58](#))

I love it. Jo Saxton, thanks for encouraging us with your passion and your vision. I pray that women will be encouraged, both in hearing the podcast and also hearing from you in Women Work & Calling in a few weeks. Thanks to Jo Saxton for her time and insight. If you were intrigued by what she had to say, encourage you to check out our upcoming event, Women Work & Calling, Saturday, October 23rd, both in person and online. We'll have a link to information about the event on our website, and it will be listed in our show notes. If you want to learn more about some of the concepts we've discussed, we'll also have a link to a free downloadable ebook called, Called Together: A Biblical Look at Gender in the



Workplace. This is an important and challenging conversation, so we're grateful for your time and joining us today. Thanks for listening to this episode of The Faith and Work podcast.

Joanna Meyer: ([40:46](#))

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