Most pastors work 50-60+ hours a week. Don’t worry about taking some time for family.

As a young pastor my significance came from having a big ring of keys, or from being told how important you are, how much your sermon meant, Phone calls in the middle of other things going on because you are “needed.” I don’t know that it gives you a shot of dopamine. I’m no medical expert, but I do know that these things feed our need to be significant, and I do know that they can be addictive in some way. There is a lesson to learn from Esther 4:13 (ESV)

*[13] Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. [14] For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

“Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther was a special person placed in a special place for a special time, and yet, “if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.” She was not indispensable, and neither are we.

**Doing -vs- Being:** It’s interesting that we preach against legalism. We condemn legalism. We criticize legalism. But the very essence of legalism is a focus on **doing rather than being**.

Galatians 5:16-25 (ESV)

*[16] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

*[25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

How often have you heard the Fruit of the Spirit quoted, and then heard something like, “These are the fruit of the Spirit. These are the things that should be in your life, so work hard at producing love, joy, peace, patience, etc.” The focus of the passage is on what the Spirit of God produces in those who are living by the Spirit and walking with the Spirit, but somehow, we change it to be something we need to work hard to produce. In doing that we have just moved from being to doing, and from fruit to works. We preach about being, but how many of us model what we preach? Let me challenge you to at the very least schedule time to be alone listening to the Spirit of God. Not doing. Not preparing. Not studying but listening. We’re all familiar with the phrase from Psalm 46:10, “Be still, or cease striving and know that I am God.” Let me share with you a quote from Christianity.com regarding that verse.

In that light (the author has just pointed out that the Psalm is written in the context of war, In that light) the tone of this verse can be read: stop striving, stop fighting, and stop trying to do things on your own. Stop stressing about the battle ahead and trust me. Wake up! I am the Lord. I am your refuge and your strength. You have nothing to fear or worry about when I am with you. I will fight your battles and deal with your enemies. So get out of my way. Step back, open your eyes, and acknowledge who I am and what I can do. Let me be God. Don’t try and do my job for me. Be patient, be still, and let me go to work. (https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/be-still-and-know-that-i-am-god-what-is-the-meaning-of-psalms-46-10.html)

Walking by faith is about trusting God to do in and through us that which we are unable to do. God is saying, “Get out of my way and Let me be God.” It makes me wonder how often God has not been at work in our churches because he is waiting for us to get out of the way. Following Christ is about being more than doing. In that light let me share a rhythm of life that I find helpful.

* Establish a daily rhythm of time in the Word and prayer that is just for you.
* Establish a weekly rhythm of time off. I took half Monday, and Saturday. I also made it a rule that at 5pm on Friday my sermon was as done as it was going to get.
* Establish a monthly rhythm of a monthly personal retreat day.
* Put both the day off and the Personal Retreat Day on your calendar. Put time with family on your calendar. When someone asks if they can meet at that time, you can look at your calendar and honestly answer that you are already booked at that time. You don’t need to tell them that the appointment you have is time playing ball in the backyard with you son.
* Establish an annual rhythm of a three-day Annual Planning Retreat.

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**On Pursuing a Healthy New Normal- several other considerations: Church’s Health**

We need to constantly come back to the question of why we are here, and whether what we are doing is aligned with our purpose. An unhealthy church will focus on maintaining that which we always knew. A church focused on being rather than doing will change and adapt based on their agreed upon purpose. The purpose never changes, but the methodology is constantly shifting.

**Leader’s Health**

We get anxious, and even sometimes angry when we don’t see change as fast as we think it should happen. One author suggested that anger is a common and almost a professional vice among pastors. Anxiety and frustration lead to anger. We get angry because we take ourselves and our ministry seriously. But I think a lot of that anger is coming from trying to bring about change rather than taking the time and process needed to let God bring about change. I believe there are four essential elements to leading effective change, and the very first one is the spiritual, relational, and emotional health of the leader. If you do not have that piece in place then nothing else works right. In terms of leading in uncertain times and trying to move to a new normal, the same thing is absolutely true. If you, as a leader, are not emotionally, relationally, and spiritually healthy the uncertainty is going to devastate you and your ministry. It is in times of high anxiety that focusing on being over doing is essential.