

March 13, 2022

Dear Justin (letter #10),

Pastoral ministry, to a great degree, runs counter to most people's schedules. So while the average person may work a Monday to Friday, 9-5 kind of job, a lot of what you will be doing will be evening and weekends. The "plus" of that is that you will have more time, than the average person, during the daylight hours each week to do things around the house. Summers will be especially nice for you. If you golf, you can go golfing while most people are at work. The negative side of it is that your schedule will also run counter to your family's schedule. So when the kids finally are home (evenings and weekends) you will be tied up with church work far more than the average dad. I don't think there is any easy answer for this problem.

Back when our children were young, Ruth and I kept a pretty tight cap on our schedules such that I did not take Monday night appointments and we tried to make every Friday night "family night." Once in awhile there were events (e.g., wedding rehearsals, or funerals) that would force us to swap a Thursday for a Friday, or a Tuesday for a Monday, but generally it was assumed I would be around on Monday evening and Friday evening and probably be gone the other nights. It wasn't ideal, but then again, no job is ideal. But you might try that.

Another thing that Ruth and I did, and even now continue to do, is to have one "date night" each month. While the children were young that meant getting and paying for a baby sitter. But we enjoyed those nights away. Doing things together, as a family, is really important. The competitiveness that we today see in our son, David (the U.S. Army captain and ranger), goes back, I am convinced, to our family "kick ball" games. We played SO MANY of those games. As David was, for many years, the youngest child, he had to try harder to compete with his older brother and sisters. Later, the kids learned to play badminton. Times for these kind of games can take place on your open nights, Sunday afternoons, or even before supper on the evenings you will be away.

May God help you to find that point of balance between work and your family.

By His Grace,
Doug Winne