

## Mark 1:35-45 "The Balanced Life of the Perfect Man" \*\*

Main Idea: Jesus, the perfect man, the perfect servant of God, lived a balanced life. Mark 1:35-45 demonstrates this for us, for it's here we see Him giving attention to three areas in His life.

I. We see Jesus' private life (35-38).

A. He prayed (35).

1. A good quiet-time must be quiet.
2. A good quiet-time takes time.
3. A good quiet-time is about God, not us.

B. He clarified His mission (36-38).

1. Our purpose isn't determined by people.
2. Our purpose is determined by God.

II. We see Jesus' public life (39).

A. He preached.

B. He confronted the enemy.

III. We see Jesus' interpersonal life (40-45).

A. He was approachable (40).

B. He was compassionate (41-42).

1. He felt for the hurting.
2. He touched the untouchable.
3. He took action to restore.

C. He was devoted to His mission (43-45).

1. His goal wasn't popularity.
2. His goal was to fulfill the Scriptures.

Response: Take to heart three responsibilities...

1. We need to know why we are here.
2. We need to exhibit balance.
3. We need to know Jesus.

Gordon MacDonald wrote the following parable, *The Persona*:

"Once a foolish man built a boat. His intention was that it would be the grandest, the most talked-about boat that ever sailed from the harbor of the boat club of which he was a member. Thus, he determined to spare no expense or effort...

As he built, the foolish man outfitted his craft with colorful sails, complex rigging, and comfortable appointments and conveniences in its cabin. The decks were made from beautiful teakwood; all the fittings were custom-made of polished brass. And on the stern, painted in gold letters, readable from a considerable distance, was the name of the boat, the *Persona*.

As he built the *Persona*, the foolish man could not resist fantasizing upon the anticipated admiration and applause from club members at the launching of his new boat. In fact, the more he thought about the praise that was soon to come, the more time and attention he gave to those aspects of the boat's appearance that would attract the crowd and intensify excitement.

Now—and this *seems* reasonable—because no one would ever see the underside of the *Persona*, the man saw little need to be concerned about the boat's keel or, for that matter, anything that had to do with the issue of properly distributed weight or ballast. Experienced sailors might wince at this, but one must

remember that the boatbuilder was acting with the perceptions of the crowd in his mind—not the seaworthiness of the vessel. Seaworthiness seems not an important issue while in a dry dock.

On one of those occasions when he was sorting out his priorities of time and resources, he said to himself, 'Why should I spend money or time on what is out of anyone's sight? When I listen to the conversations of people at the club, I hear them praising only what they can see. I can never remember anyone admiring the underside of a boat.'

So driven by such reasoning, the foolish man built his boat. And everything that would be visible to the people soon began to beam with excellence. But things that would be invisible when the boat entered the water were generally ignored. People did not seem to take notice of this, or if they did, they made no comment.

The builder's suspicions were correct: the people of the boat club understood and appreciated sails, rigging, decks, brass, and staterooms. And what they saw, they praised. Sometimes he overheard people say that his efforts to build the grandest boat in the history of the club would someday result in his selection as commodore...

When the day came for the boat's maiden voyage, the people of the club joined him at dockside. A bottle of champagne was broken over the bow, and the moment came for the man to set sail. As the breeze filled the sails and pushed the *Persona* from the club's harbor, he stood at the helm and heard what he'd anticipated for years: the cheers and well-wishes of envious admirers who said to one another, 'Our club has never seen a grander boat than this.'

Soon the beautiful *Persona* was merely a blip on the horizon. And as it cut through the swells, its builder and owner, who at this moment seemed anything but a foolish man, gripped the rudder with a feeling of fierce pride. What he had accomplished! He was seized with an increasing rush of confidence that everything—the boat, his future as a boat-club member (and probably as commodore), and even the ocean (why not when one is feeling confident?)—was his to control."

What happened to the man and his boat, which I'll share at the end of this message, is as predictable as what happens to any person who fails to live a balanced life. It's so easy to give attention to the seen and ignore the unseen, to pour our energies into what we consider important only to ignore what is essential.

This morning we're going to examine the balanced life of the perfect man. Jesus, the perfect man, the perfect servant of God, lived a balanced life while on earth. The Bible calls us not only to believe in Him but also to walk in His steps. We need to know Him as Savior first, and then as example.

Most of us struggle to maintain the kind of balance in life God intended. Some of us work too much. Some of us play too much. Most people I talk to say their lives are a whirlwind of activity, even good activity, but at the end of the day they have a gnawing sense that something's out of whack.

We need to take a good look at Jesus. In Mark 1:35-45 we see a vivid picture of a balanced life, for it's here we see the perfect man giving attention to three areas in His life.

### I. We see Jesus' private life (35-38).

Verse 35—"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." With that brief statement Mark gives us wonderful insight into the portion of Jesus' life that was unseen and hidden from public view. He says that Jesus got up early in the morning. How early? Very early. 4:00, maybe 5:00. The text says it was still dark.

To appreciate the significance of that statement we must recall what the previous day had been like for

Jesus. It was a Sabbath day. Jesus had gone to the synagogue in Capernaum, taught there in the morning and even liberated a demon-possessed man to the amazement of the crowd (21-28). After leaving the synagogue Jesus walked to Simon and Andrew's home for the noon meal (29). There He healed Simon's mother-in-law. That evening after the sun went down the whole town gathered at the door (33), and Jesus healed many sick people and drove out many demons. It was no doubt well into the night when the last person finally left and Jesus was able to lay down and rest His weary body.

What do you do after a busy day of serving God and people? There's nothing wrong with rest, but there is something more important than rest and that is proper attention to your *private life*. I'm not talking about time for *you*. I'm talking about time to do what Jesus did, that is, get alone with your heavenly Father.

Please note that Jesus accomplished two vital activities in His private time with His Father.

A. He prayed (35). Mark says he left the house, went to a solitary place, and there *prayed*. The term is *proseuchomai*. It simply means "to call on God." The tense indicates continuous action. Jesus didn't merely recite prayers. He called on God and called on God and called on God. Isaiah 50:4 speaks prophetically of the Messiah, "The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught."

Just think of it. Jesus served on earth as we must, by faith and in dependence upon the Spirit. Wiersbe is right, "Workers who are too busy to pray are too busy, and God will not bless their efforts ( John 15:5 ). If the Son of God had to spend time in prayer while ministering on earth, how much more do we need to pray!"

Do you have a daily quiet time with God? If Jesus viewed time with the Father as more important than sleep, we'd better take note. From Jesus' example we learn three marks of a good quiet time.

1. *A good quiet-time must be quiet.* He left the house. Why? To find a place to be alone with the Father since first century homes offered little privacy. He went to a solitary place. Why? So there would be no distractions.

We need consistent alone times with our God. We're so bombarded by human voices and worldly noises. God created us for Himself. "Be still and know that I am God," He says in Psalm 46:10. Do you spend *quiet* time with God, with television off, cell phone off, even with the music off, just you and Him? A good quiet time must be *quiet*.

2. *A good quiet-time takes time.* How much time? There's no magic number. Jesus left the house very early in the morning—I don't think that means He woke up 5 minutes early or even 15 minutes. The parallel text of Luke 5:16 indicates Jesus did this often, stating, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

It's so easy to talk about prayer, to teach about prayer, and to tell others to pray. But it's hard to pray as Jesus did. A quality quiet time will cost you sleep. It will require self-denial as you carve out of your schedule uninterrupted time to be with your Father.

3. *A good quiet-time is about God, not us.* In his biography of Jesus' life Mark includes three accounts where Jesus is at prayer, this one at the beginning of his gospel, another near the middle (6:46), and still another towards the end (14:32ff). And each time we see Jesus at prayer in Mark's gospel it was in a setting of trial. The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* explains, "All three were occasions when He was faced with the possibility of achieving His messianic mission in a more attractive, less costly way. But in each case He gained strength through prayer."

In the two other places in Mark's gospel where Jesus prayed, the Lord was facing a crisis, a specific crisis. In 6:46 He prayed after the feeding of the 5,000 when the crowds were cheering for Him. You say, "That doesn't sound like a crisis." It is if you remember Jesus didn't come to gain crowds. He came to die for sinners. The temptation was real. Would He change the mission His Father had given Him?

In 14:32-41 the crisis is more obvious. There we see Him in Gethsemane. Would He drink the cup or not? And so He prays, "Father, not my will, but Yours be done." A good QT is about God, not us, about seeing His will accomplished, not ours.

It's no different in our text. There's a crisis at hand. You say, "What crisis? The whole town just came to Simon's house to see Jesus. How is that a crisis?" Answer this. Why did they come? Out of devotion? No. Because they believe in Him? No. They want something *from Him*. To be healed. To see a miracle. To hear an inspiring message. Yes, the crowds were coming to Jesus, but why? The people were exhibiting shallow and deficient responses to Jesus.

With this "crisis" at hand Jesus went where He always went in times of need, to the One who loved Him with an unconditional and eternal love, to the One who gave Him a mission to fulfill. He went to His Father. When crisis hit Jesus prayed.

And certainly, it wasn't just in crisis. Jesus prayed often. He gave constant attention to His private life, namely to His time with His heavenly Father. Can we do less?

Something else happened in Jesus' private life, something revealed by what happened next. First, He prayed. In so doing...

B. He clarified His mission (36-38). "Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'"

It's not easy to protect your quiet time with God. Here Mark uses the verb *katadiokein* to tell what Simon and his buddies did to interrupt Jesus' prayer time, a term which literally means "to track down" or "hunt," and usually involves a hostile sense. Simon and the others seem to think Jesus will be glad to know that "everybody wants to see you!" Little did they realize that it was this shallowness that drove the Lord away from them to pray in the first place.

Realize this. Jesus is not interested in being what *we want* Him to be—a Genie in a bottle, a quick fix, a good luck charm. He is who He is and His Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

In Luke's parallel account he says that not just Simon and the disciples but the *multitudes* went searching for Jesus (Luke 4:42). Luke also indicates their motive: they "tried to keep Him from going away from them." In other words, the folks at Capernaum wanted Him all for themselves. If you found a Genie-in-a-bottle would you share him with others? Self-seeking sinners don't share. And self-seeking sinners, as we all are, don't need a Genie-in-a-bottle, either, but a *Savior*.

Note carefully Jesus' response. "That is why I have come," He said. Why? *To preach*, He emphasized. Wessel says it well, "Healings and exorcisms had their place, but they were not to usurp the primary purpose for which Jesus had come."

Let this sink in. Yes, Jesus can heal, cast out demons, and perform miracles. And He did, to substantiate His unique identity as the Messiah. But that's not the main reason He came. He came to earth, as verse 14 says, to preach the good news of God's salvation and, as verse 15 indicates, to call men and women to repent and believe.

The sad fact, then as now, is that people can be distracted from seeing the truth about Jesus. It happens when they focus on and seek the spectacular—such as healings and demon casting and so forth. Jesus would have no part of it then—He left such shallow minded folks. We must avoid it today.

Here is a vital reason why we need to give attention to our private lives, as did Jesus, first to pray and in so doing, to clarify our mission or purpose.

1. *Our purpose isn't determined by people.*

2. *Our purpose is determined by God.*

Jesus loved people, without question. But Jesus didn't let people determine His life. He wasn't swayed by popular opinion. He didn't live to make people like Him. He lived to fulfill the mission His Father had given Him.

Here's where we get into trouble. We either don't know that we have a God-given purpose, or we know it and don't accept it. You say, "What's our purpose?" Here it is—"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33)." Put another way—"Glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:20)." That's why we are here, to bring glory to God.

A few years ago I did an exercise. I prayerfully sought to come up with a one sentence answer to the question, "What is God's purpose for my life?" I recommend you do the same. Here is my purpose statement. My purpose in life is *to know Christ and to make Him known to others*. A purpose statement helps you in decision making. In deciding what to do with our time, our talents, and our treasures, the real question becomes, "Which choice will best accomplish my God-given purpose?"

I'm very concerned. Far too many Christians either don't know or don't accept their God-given life purpose. How else can we explain why we have time to go to our kids ball games, mow our yard, eat out, watch our favorite television show, check our email regularly, and a host of other things on a weekly basis, but haven't been to church four straight Sundays for longer than we can remember?

We need, as Jesus did, to give attention to our private life. It's in our quiet time with God that we can pray and clarify His purpose for our lives. Now area #2...

## II. We see Jesus' public life (39).

Verse 39—"So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons." Notice Jesus did in His public life exactly what His Father clarified for Him in His private life. He engaged in two activities...

A. He preached. Then...

B. He confronted the enemy. How? He cast out demons. He set people free from their captivity by confronting the evil one and his wicked hosts and sending them away.

Mark says that the Lord left Capernaum and traveled throughout Galilee, going to synagogue after synagogue, doing the very same thing He had done in Capernaum. First and foremost, He *preached*, proclaiming the Word of God over and over again. And then He demonstrated His power over the opponent of that message by casting out demons.

Let me say a word about preaching. It's no secret that preaching has fallen on tough times. Some today think it's a poor communication approach. Jesus didn't. Again, don't miss this. When people came to Jesus, not to hear His Word, but to experience healing and see Him perform miracles, He wasn't impressed. In fact, He left them. He went other places and preached.

What's happening today in church after church? The notion is circulated, "People won't come to church to

hear the Word preached. They want excitement. They want a show. If we give them what they want, we can reach them." But Jesus said people need preaching, not a show. "Let's go somewhere else," He said, "so I can preach. That's why I have come."

Faith comes by hearing the Word. Not by watching a show. Not by using just the right kind of music. The Lord has chosen preaching to be the means for the salvation of His people (see 1 Cor 1:20-25).

What is a balanced life? Jesus gave attention to His private life and to His public life. In the next scene...

### III. We see Jesus' interpersonal life (40-45).

Jesus didn't see simply masses of people. He saw the individual, a fact illustrated no more powerfully than in the following encounter. In fact, it's here we discover three traits that characterized how Jesus related to people.

A. He was approachable (40). "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'" Luke's account indicates the man was "full of leprosy."

Leprosy was a terrible disease, then as now. The suffering was social as well as physical. The law required that the leper wear torn clothes, let his hair remain unkempt, cover the lower part of his face, and cry out wherever he went, "Unclean! Unclean!"

This man had lived in total isolation for who knows how long, an outcast. No wife's kiss. No children's hug. Not even a friend's handshake, not for years. He was walking death, a man without hope and purpose.

But he came to Jesus. That in itself was against the law. He came and fell on his knees and made his plea. He had no doubt Jesus could heal him, only a question of willingness. "If you are willing," he said, "you can make me clean."

Why did this leper dare approach Jesus? Because Jesus was approachable.

B. He was compassionate (41-42). "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured." Three things are true of compassionate Jesus.

1. *He felt for the hurting.* He was "filled with compassion." The Greek word is *splagchnizomai*, a verb meaning "to be moved in the inward parts, to have pity, to have one's heart go out to." That's Jesus. He felt for hurting people.

2. *He touched the untouchable.* In their accounts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention this startling point. Jesus reached out His hand and *touched* the leper. Undoubtedly, this was the first loving touch this man had felt in years. Someone observed that Jesus could have flung the gift of healing to him, as we fling a bone to a dog, but that's not Jesus.

It was actually against Jewish law to touch a leper. Such action made a person unclean. But Jesus placed love over ceremonial law. Indeed, when He touched corruption, it didn't defile Him. Rather His touch made defilement go away.

That's why he came, as J. D. Jones observes, "This is a parable of what Jesus was doing all through His life. He was continually 'touching the leper.' What was His incarnation? It was a case of 'touching the leper.' He 'took hold' upon the seed of Abraham. He was found in the likeness of human flesh. And yet He contracted no defilement...Jesus never brought a smudge or a stain upon His perfect purity. Instead of that His purity cleansed the sinners and lepers whom He touched."

3. *He took action to restore.* "Immediately, the leprosy left him and he was cured." This was no gradual process, but immediate cleansing.

Some people *feel*, but that's as far as their compassion goes. Not Jesus. He felt. He touched. He took action to restore. That's true compassion.

What He did next might surprise you, but it reveals another trait of our Lord, one we saw in the last scene.

C. He was devoted to His mission (43-45). "Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning." Stop there for a moment. The verb "sent away" is intense—in other places it's used of casting out demons. The words "strong warning" come from a term that originally meant "to snort like a horse." It indicates there was anger or indignation in Jesus' voice, perhaps because Jesus knew the man was not going to obey what he was about to hear.

Here's what Jesus told him—verse 44, "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Why the secrecy? It has to do with His mission again. He'd come to die for sinners, not get a crowd, and the latter is what He knew He'd have if the healed leper spread the word. To put it another way...

1. *His goal wasn't popularity.*

2. *His goal was to fulfill the Scriptures.* Jesus told the man to go see the priest because that's what the Law said to do to verify a leper was cleansed. Leviticus 14 said the priest was to offer two clean birds, and on day eight two male lambs, one ewe lamb, a grain offering, and a log of oil. Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not negate it.

Jesus said to do this "as a testimony to them." That significant phrase can be taken in two ways—positively (a "convincing witness") or negatively (a "convicting or incriminating witness").

Again, Jesus didn't come to heal everybody. He came to proclaim the good news of God (verse 14) and to call people to repent and believe (verse 15). The miracles were attention getters. He hadn't come to put on a carnival show, but to reconcile sinners to God.

I'll reiterate. Plenty of folks are willing to come to Jesus to see a show. Only those in whom the Spirit is at work will come to have Him change their sinful hearts.

But the man didn't obey. Verse 45—"Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere."

The man disobeyed. Jesus told him to keep quiet, but he proclaimed it to the world. Ironically, Jesus said we are to tell the world, but so often we keep quiet!

The reason for the commanded silence was so He could continue to preach in the villages. But because the man talked, the crowd of healing-seekers became so thick there was no way Jesus could preach in the villages.

Disobedience, even if the motive is good, produces harmful results.

Mark says Jesus had to stay in "lonely places." In Luke's account this note is added (Luke 5:16), "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places *and prayed.*"

So there you have it—the balanced life of the perfect man. Jesus gave attention to His private life, His public life, and to His interpersonal life.

When we left the *Persona* earlier, it was heading out to sea in splendor, its builder gloating at the applause of the crowd. The pride soon turned to shame as Gordon MacDonald explains:

"A few miles out to sea a storm arose. Not a hurricane. But not a squall either. There were sudden gusts in excess of forty knots, waves above fifteen feet. The *Persona* began to shudder, and water swept over the sides. Bad things began to happen, and the poise of the 'captain' began to waver. Perhaps the ocean wasn't his after all.

How about connections with other club members? The ones who sailed from the harbor on either side, cheering and waving? He looked about for them. But none were to be seen. The boats that had been there in the early part of the voyage had turned back long ago. He'd been too self-absorbed to notice...

Within minutes the *Persona's* colorful sails were in shreds, the splendid mast was splintered in pieces, and the rigging was unceremoniously draped all over the bow. The teakwood decks and the lavishly appointed cabin were awash with water. And then before the foolish man could prepare himself, a wave bigger than anything he'd ever seen hurled down upon the *Persona*, and the boat capsized...

When most boats would have righted themselves after such a battering, the *Persona* did not. Why? Because its builder—this very foolish man—had ignored the importance of what was below the waterline. There was no weight there. In a moment when a well-designed keel and adequate ballast might have saved the ship, they were nowhere to be found. The foolish man had concerned himself with the appearance of things and not enough with resilience and stability in the secret, unseen places where storms are withstood...

The foolish man was never found. Today, when people speak of him—which is rare—they comment not upon the initial success of the man or upon the beauty of his boat but only upon the silliness of putting out on an ocean where storms are sudden and violent. And doing it with a boat that was really never built for anything else but the vanity of its builder and the praise of spectators. It was in such conversations that the owner of the *Persona*, whose name has long been forgotten, because known simply as the foolish man."

Response: Take to heart three responsibilities...

1. *We need to know why we are here.* Can you state your purpose for living?
2. *We need to exhibit balance.* Perhaps you've been ignoring your private life. Conversely, maybe you need to get out and invest time with people. Balance is key. But the bottom line is clear.
3. *We need to know Jesus.* As our Savior. Then as our example.