

Reveal
What Do We Do Now?
November 8, 2009
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He will never let go, he will come through. Listen to this promise down further in James 1:12. ***Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*** Thank you Father for being faithful through the years and God we know you're going to continue being faithful for those who are in a storm today. In Jesus name amen. I want to read a little more of this passage because this really opens us up to this message that we need to talk about today. Today we are talking about Reveal, what that survey we did a couple of months ago showed us as a church; what the people in our church said about their beliefs and where they were spiritually. We saw some very interesting things and we want to help people move. For those of you who are new to our church, our goal is to take people who really don't want to go to church or don't like church, to show them who Jesus truly is in life, truly what God is about and then we want to take them down the avenue to a place where they become fully devoted followers and a fully devoted follower is someone who knows God and loves him with all their heart, all their soul and all their strength. It's someone who grows together with other people and continues walking the road of Christian faith and someone who serves inside the church and to a community around them. That's a fully devoted follower, that's what we're looking for. As we did this survey we realized that about twenty seven percent of you were stalled in your spiritual life. You were stuck. You had maybe accepted Christ at a point in your life and there was a time that you were excited about God. There was a time that you may have been growing in Christ but you just got stuck so we want to focus on how to move you past that point. Let me tell you the bigger problem that we found in that survey. As we began to study this survey and began to look at it, it showed us some things that surprised us and even shocked us a little bit and maybe it shouldn't have but it goes along with this passage with James as it continues in verse 13. It says, ***When tempted no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when its full-grown gives birth to death. Don't be deceived my dear brothers.*** Now, we're living in a society, living in a time, living in a culture that we are being deceived as a people and it's not just people in general, its people in church. It is people who claim to know Jesus as their savior. We are living in a time that many people inside the church are deceived about what the truth is and as we took this survey we never expected down here in the Bible belt, I mean we're the buckle, we never expected this to show up in our church. You know if the church was up north, we could expect that, those crazy Yankees, we know their out of their mind, but don't here in the south where we love fried chicken and God, we just know that everyone would just not be deceived and we would have a handle on the truth. It shouldn't surprise us though that people in this room are deceived by who God is. It shouldn't surprise us because Jesus warned his disciples over two thousand

years ago that this day was coming. He said that there was going to be a time that many people even that call on me will be deceived. If you have your bible with you turn to Matthew 24. If you don't have your bible I'll have it on the screen but if you have your bible, open it up. Look at chapter 24 of Matthew, the disciples are coming out and these country boys are amazed at this temple. This temple is beautiful, inlaid with gold and they're looking at this temple and they're trying to get Jesus' attention, it says, ***Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came to him and called his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many.*** Even people inside the church will be deceived by finding other ways to get to God, by finding other ways that lead you to God. They'll pervert the gospel, they'll say hey this is the way to God, this is the way to God and when he says other will people will say I'm the Christ, I know some of you are probably thinking nobody's doing that, yeah, there's actually a guy in Florida that claims to be Jesus. He actually goes around saying that he is the incarnate Jesus Christ and I have a great way to see if it's true...let's kill him and see if he comes back. If so we'll worship him and if that's too radical for you let's take him a glass of water and ask him to turn it into wine. If he can do that I'll be amazed too but I can't drink it if he makes it but some of you can. So, there are people today that are claiming they're Jesus. That's not the only thing, it's not just the crazy's that are claiming to be Jesus, when he said other people will be claiming I'm the Christ, what he is saying is other people are going to claim that they're the way to heaven. They're the way to the father and we're living in a culture that is screaming that from the mountain tops and even people in the church are starting to believe it. They're saying hey we need to be tolerant of one another. We need to be compassionate, we need to live and let live. It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere and whatever you believe about God is okay because all roads lead to God. God is this wonderful grandparent in the sky that is full of love and sugar and honey and all he wants us to do is have a great life and be happy and then when we get there he is going to pat us on the head and say you made it. I want you to understand I know about being a grandfather. It's great by the way. Misty came home this weekend and we hadn't seen her since August, she drug Bonham with her but that's okay too, anyway we all got together and the Hough's came over and we had a lot of people in my house and we cooked and I made a plate for my three year old grandson and I sat it in front of him and apparently the chicken was poison because anytime it came near his mouth he would scream and that's okay, you don't have to eat so he comes to me about five minutes later with a bag of chips and somebody looks at me and says you're not going to let him have those are you? Sure I am, here you go baby, have some chips; you don't need to eat that nasty chicken. So he eats chips and I ask him if he wants ice cream to follow. I know what being a grandparent is like. But God's not a grandparent and some of you need to understand that God's not tolerant. God has set the stage and God has said this is the way to me. Now, he is love and he provided a way for us all to get to him and there is only one way and every other way he said leads to death. But, with that is a fact...fifty three percent believe that good people will go to heaven. Fifty three percent of Americans believe that good people will go to heaven and listen, everyone in this room;

you're all the good people. I mean you're in church today; the bad folks are in jail. So of course we're all good the only problem with that is the bible tells us that there is none righteous not even one that none of us want to go to God, none of us want to see God, that we are all evil. Do I have to prove that to anybody in the room? Is there anybody in the room that we really need to talk to about being a perfect person? Is there anybody here that would say this morning, I'm okay. You may be good. Let me tell you good people getting into heaven is like swimming to Hawaii from California. If we all lined up on the coast of California and we're going to swim to Hawaii and that's the only way we're going to be safe because everyone in America is going to catch the Swine Flu and we're all going to die. We have to get to Hawaii but the only way we can get there is to swim. When we line up on that coast, I want you to get a picture of this, we're all wearing our bathing suits and we're standing there on the coast and the whistle is going to blow and we're all going to jump in the water and swim to Hawaii. I am going to have to be honest with you about twenty yards out, I'm dead. It's over because I swim to live, that's it. I fall out of the boat, I swim to the boat. I'm in the pool; I swim to get to the side. It is a panic swim for me. I don't enjoy swimming and I don't float well. Twenty yards in I'm down and I've had people swimming laughing at me because you really stink at swimming, yeah I do and you may be a good swimmer. You may swim out there a mile or two your proud of yourself but guess what? You're going to be as dead as I am. Even an Olympic swimmer swimming fifty miles, swim two hundred miles, do you know where he's going to be? He will be just further down on the ocean floor because it's impossible for even an Olympic swimmer to get to Hawaii. It's impossible to be a good enough person to get to heaven. Good people don't make it, that's why God sent his Son who was perfect in every way and lived a life without sin and said you know what...you're not good enough to make it but my son decided with my knowledge that he's going to give his life and trade. Fifty three percent of Americans believe good people go to heaven, the problem with that is there are no good people.

Here's an even scarier statistic, forty three percent of born again Christians believe it doesn't matter what faith you follow. Wow! It doesn't matter, let's just all get along and that's the culture of our day and that's what the world leaders want to tell us. That's what people want us to follow. Listen, we all just need to get along and embrace all the other religions. I saw a bumper sticker that had peace written across it and it had all the different emblems of religion. Let me tell you something about religion, it's not just Christianity that claims they have the only way to God, every religion claims they have the only way to God and listen, they can't all be right. Somebody has to be wrong and I'm pretty sure it's not us. I hope it's those Buddhists. I hope they're wrong because I don't want to come back as a cow and some of you are going to be coming back as cats because you're not doing to good. By the way, that's the lowest thing you can actually be is a cat. In fact, cats are the only thing that God let Satan create so just hold on to that whenever you go home. I hope the Buddhists are wrong; in fact I'm pretty sure they are. Now the Muslims they've got a pretty good idea. In fact I pulled a scripture from their bible the Karan it's Syrah 4:34: You're going to love this verse...it says Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great. Did you hear the Muslims? Don't you hope they're wrong? If

they're right then some of you will need a beating this afternoon. Boy, I hope they're wrong. Mormons, you think it's bad for the Muslim women? If you're a Mormon women you don't go to heaven unless your husband gives you permission. If your husband gives you permission to go to heaven then you get to go to heaven. I've seen some of your marriages and your husband's not giving you permission. I've lived with her for fifty years, I'm done, and I'm not spending eternity. Then if he does give you permission, this is heaven for you. Picture this just for a minute; it's just going to make tears come to your eyes. You're going to be eternally pregnant. Does anybody want to sign up for that? Have you ever lived with a pregnant woman guys? Is that heaven to anybody in this room? I hope they're wrong and then what you're going to do is you're going to be eternally pregnant and you're going to populate a planet. I've got five kids and that's too many. I hope they're wrong. They also think that Jesus and Satan are brothers. I'm pretty sure they're wrong. Somebody has to be wrong. I believe the bible tells us something very plain even though fifty seven percent of evangelicals believe many religions lead to eternal life, wow, many religions. If you can say that this morning and you believe that I want to know what you do with this verse. John 14:6, ***Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** What do you do with this verse in Acts 4:12? ***Salvation is found in one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*** What do you do with those two verses? I'll tell you what you do with them and this is why we're talking about this today and why it frightens me, in this church fifteen percent of the people who took the survey do not believe the bible is the word of God. I want that to sink in for everybody. Fifteen percent of you say the bible is not the authority, now I know some of you took the survey and are saying I didn't see that question. The survey was multi layered and depending on how you answered the questions it sent you to different questions so if you said the bible is one hundred percent accurate and authority in my life it didn't go one and give you anymore questions because you pretty much stated the fact. Fifteen percent of you said that the bible is not the authority and is not ultimate truth. That scares me. Thirteen percent of you said there is more than one way to God than Jesus. Now folks I'm not talking about nation averages now, I'm not talking about liberal churches, I'm talking about you, The Avenue Church. Even scarier, seven percent of you said there is probably just one God, they are many. As your pastor, I looked at this stuff and said wow God, what do we do, how can we take these people and help them understand the truth of the Word of God? How can we take these people who are religious and are coming to church and they look like the church people but in their hearts they do not believe the Word of God, they do not believe in the Son of God and they will not inherit life. What do we do God to help them? How do we move them along to find out what the truth is? How do we break the worlds hold on them and break the lies of Satan and let them live in the truth and let them have this life? I'll tell you one of the ways is we have to take the stalled group out there, we have to take those of you who know God and because of emotional problems or because of relationship problems or because of lack of time or because of your hobbies in life, you've stopped growing spiritually. You guys have got to get back on the road and the only way to do that is to focus you on bible reading; to focus you on prayer; for us to focus you on evangelism; for us to focus you on serving because that's how you get unstalled. You start doing the things you know to do that the bible says, then you get unstalled and things become a priority; God becomes real again in your life. We get that twenty percent moving and mobilized and they

start serving God, then these people who don't know the truth will begin to catch on to the truth and so we're going to do that as a church. We're going to focus on getting you unstalled but a long with that we're also going to move to stop being your spiritual parent and to be your spiritual coach. We don't want to be you're spiritual parent, that's not what the church is for. A spiritual parent that feeds you and you know we've been guilty of this. We have grown a generation of people who expect the church to do everything for them spiritually. We've been arrogant as a church to say if we just have the right program then you're going to love God. If we can just get the right program and get enough people in it then you're going to be a fully devoted follower but that's not how it works. We discovered that's not what we need. We don't need to be your spiritual parent. We don't need to spoon feed you, we need to coach you and help you on your journey by developing a plan individually to grow. Listen; if we all went into the gym tomorrow together and we had a personal trainer do you think he would give us all the same workout plan? My son in law plays college baseball and they gave him a plan and they said David you do everything Bonham does, I would have to shoot them or me and it wouldn't matter which one at that point but that doesn't mean I can't exercise, that doesn't mean I can't be trained, it just means that I'm at a different level. The church is to take you at whatever level you are and to give you the tools you need to take that next step and that's what we have commit to do. One of the things we're going to do as we move you through this process is we want to extend the impact of our weekend services. We want the weekend to be something you do not want to miss. We want you to be here because whatever level you are, we want to help you. We have stopped as a staff asking this question, we have stopped asking how many because if we start basing our church on how many, we are knocking it out of the park. We're incredible if we talk about how many. Our church is over four times the size it was. We baptized ninety five people and our budget is seven percent over last year in a down economy and we're building a six million dollar building to win people. You go with buildings and baptism and budgets...we're knocking out of the park. You talk about people coming on Sunday morning and how many children we have, we're knocking it out of the park but that's not the question we're going to ask. Our question is how do we help you grow? Because you came here on this weekend, how can we help you grow in Christ? That's the question we want to ask.

Then we want to in the halls go beyond the question "How are you?" Our greeters and our staff and everybody in our church in life groups they always ask this question "How are you?" and they mean it, they truly want to know how you are but we're going to take it to another level. We're not just going to ask how you are; we're going to ask how your relationship to Christ is? How is your relationship to Jesus right now? Where are you with God? These are questions that we want to ask on a weekly basis. Then we want to ask you what is helping you grow spiritually, what are the things that are helping you grow spiritually and third, how can this church help you take the next step? Those are the questions we're going to ask each other.

The final question is did we help somebody grow and who are we targeting? Are we targeting those exploring Christ, those new people who are just coming in and seeing? Are we targeting those people who made a slight commitment but their life hasn't changed? Are we targeting those people who are close to Christ but he's not everything? Are we targeting those people who are Christ centered? Everything we do is to impact you and to help you take that

next step and your church is committing to be an impact in your life every time you come in this door no matter where you are, we're going to challenge you to grow spiritually. Let me tell you why. As you grow spiritually and learn the truth, then God can bring the increase to this church. People are going to come when we get this new building and my question is who is going to lead them? We have a small staff, smaller than any church our size. Your staff can't lead them; we're just scrambling around trying to keep our head above water. Who's going to lead them? You are, but listen we can't let you lead them if you don't believe God is the only God. We can't let you lead them if you think there are other ways besides Jesus. We can't let you lead them because you don't believe in the bible so we've got to take the steps. Our commitment to you is to give you the tools to grow, but here's the hard part especially for somebody like me. I am kind of a type A, have you noticed that? I get a little excited about God and want great things to happen but as much as I want that I can't make anyone in here grow. I can't make you take the next step. I can't make you a fully devoted follower. We can't do anything to do that even though our desire is for you to be a fully devoted follower, although we desire you to be Christ centered and make a difference in this world; we can only provide you the information and the tools.

The next step is all you. What is your next step? For some of you it's salvation. For some of you, you need to ask Jesus to come into your life. For some of you it's to follow him in baptism. It's to take that step and know that you've been obedient and for some of you it's to pick up the Word of God and to begin reading the Word of God. For some of you, you need to take the opportunity to get back on the horse and ride again because you've fallen off and you know you're not living the way God wants you to live. See here's the incredible thing about God. Everyone in this room he speaks to and he speaks differently and while I can't list all the things that God wants you to do in your life, I can list some of them. God is speaking to you today, what is he saying? For some of you he's asking you to put some things out of your life. He's asking you to change and to give your heart over to him again. That next step is yours. We're going to provide the tools, the opportunity is here but you have to take that step. Father God we pray for this group that is gathered. God we pray that you're preparing a church of fully devoted followers. God a church that can change the world they live in and impact the people in it and see people come to salvation and family's restored and lives changed because they've been obedient to you. God help us as a church to give the tools that is needed to everyone that is here to always make it clear what the next step is. God help the people here right now commit to that next step. What is your next step? If its salvation, pray this prayer, Father forgive me, come in to my heart, forgive my sins. Cleanse me, be my master and ruler. That's all it takes. For others of you, you need to call the church office and say I've got to get on the next baptism schedule. I'm ready, I've been putting it off and I need to do that. Some of you need to bow at this alter and say God I've messed up but I'm ready to come home. What's that next step for you today? You take it as we sing.