

Bucket List—Encountering God

PPT: Intro Slide

Stand up if:

- You went on the zip line today that was on campus
- You want to go to grad school
- You have a secret desire to be in a boy band
- You have a secret desire to date someone in a boy band
- You want to travel the world someday
- You cruise around campus on a skateboard
- Your baseball team is still in the playoffs (Giants, Cardinals, Orioles, Kansas City)
- You voted in the student elections this week
- You secretly would love the thrill of robbing a bank
- You've ever wanted to slap down someone's food plate as they walk by

This week we've been out on campus all day talking with students about their bucket lists.

According to our panels most people want to travel the world.

A Bucket List is a list of things you would want to do before you kick the bucket.

What are some things on your bucket list? (get answers from the group)

- Graduate, Get the perfect job, Lose weight, Learn another language...

Let me tell you something about Bucket Lists. If I was to look at your cell phone, I could probably tell who's pretty important to you by glancing at your text or call list. Similarly, bucket list items can say a lot about our top priorities and what's really most important to us. These are the things we most want to do. These are the things we stay up at night losing sleep over. They are also the things that can bring us a lot of joy or get us into a lot of trouble.

Whether we realize it or not, we all have bucket lists. We all have very private or very visible desires that motivate us and lead us into action. Your first kiss, your wedding day, the birth of your kids; these will no doubt be amazing experiences and adventures in your life. But, can you think of anything that would be as amazing as an actual real life encounter with your creator God? Can you imagine encountering the God of the universe—face to face. The God who created the world and everything in it. The God who reached down into the dust of the earth and crafted His people. The God who breathed the breath of life into us. The God who could create something out of nothing. The God who can create something as vast as the universe and as intricate as an Ant's brain. The God who could heal the sick, fight for the outcast, restore the broken, deliver us from all kinds of evil, and raise the dead. Don't you think an encounter with that God would be a moment to remember? As I asked students the question of what they thought it would be like to have that type of encounter with God, I got a lot of answers like, Humbling, amazing, I'd be in awe. But probably the best response I got was from an atheist

student who said, "It would change my life." This is the type of encounter that Moses wanted. In fact, it was the top item on his Bucket List. Let's take a look.

PPT: Artistic rendition of God's encounter with Moses

PPT: Exodus 33:18-19 (NLT)

Moses responded, "Then show me your glorious presence." The Lord replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."

PPT: Exodus 34:5-7 (NLT)

Then the LORD came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin."

Moses wanted an encounter with God and he got it! He asked God to show him his glorious presence. God came down in a cloud and revealed himself to Moses. Yahweh. The LORD. Ok, Number one on Moses Bucket List. Check!

The reason why it was possible for Moses to have an encounter with God is because God longs to reveal himself to us. Did you hear that? God wants to reveal himself to us. Isn't that crazy? The God of the universe wants an encounter with us so he can reveal himself.

Let me share with you three ways God reveals himself to us.

PPT: First, God reveals his character to us.

In his encounter with Moses, God goes out of his way to make sure that Moses truly understands who He is. Listen to what God tells Moses about himself as he passes by. Now keep in mind, God could say anything in this passing moment. But, here is what he wants Moses and us to understand about him.

I am the God called Yahweh. I am the LORD. I am the God of compassion. I am the God of mercy. I am the God who is slow to anger. I am the God who is filled with unfailing love. I am the God who is faithful. I am the God who forgives.

I am the God who is lavish (wasteful) with my love to a thousand generations.

Telephone (In rows, have them play telephone and share the experience)

What can happen to a personal message over a thousand generations. It will get garbled. Thank God we have recorded scripture that can last through generations. But what about personal encounters? God wants an encounter with you to reveal himself to you so who he is and what he is about, his very attributes and character, are unmistakably clear, not garbled, and impactful to you.

For God, it's important that you know, he sees when you need help and he wants to help you. He gives second chances even when we don't deserve them. Although he has every right to feel jilted beyond our comprehension at the evil in this world, he is patient with our shortcomings. His love is unconditional and his faithfulness endures, not for a moment, but for our whole

lives—a thousand generations in fact. His mercy triumphs over judgment. All throughout scripture, God shares with us his true nature, Yahweh is good! And he wants to reveal that to you.

Also, in his encounter with Moses, God shares his name. Yahweh. When Moses interacts with God in Exodus 3:13-15, he wants to know God's name. God replies, "I am that I am," or "I will be that I will be" meaning Elohim. To summarize the New Bible Dictionary, "Yahweh was the God of the Patriarchs, and we read of Yahweh the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, concerning which Elohim says, this is my name forever. Yahweh, therefore, in contrast with Elohim, is a proper noun. The name of a person, though that person is divine. Yahweh presents God as a person, and so brings him into relationship with other, human, personalities. It brings God near to humanity, and he speaks to the Patriarch as one friend to another." To say Yahweh is to say God; to say God is to say Yahweh. Yahweh is a very personal name for God and God wanted to share it with Moses using it to define his attributes of love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

Moses' encounter with God even went one step further. He didn't just ask to see God. He asked to see God's Glorious Presence. He wanted to see God's glory. We know God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve and you can probably think of other instances where God personally revealed himself to people in scripture, like Saul on the road to Damascus. But God had never revealed his powerful glory to anyone in this way before. Later on God's glory is revealed at the dedication of Solomon's temple and to Ezekiel the prophet. But it was not like the experience Moses asked for. Exodus 34:20, "But, you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live. The LORD continued, Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen."

In his glorious presence, looking at the face of God meant death. So God protected Moses and covered him allowing him to see his glorious presence from behind.

Moses had an amazing encounter with God. His bucket list was complete when God revealed himself.

God reveals himself through his attributes because they stand out. No one is like him. His character is good. His very nature is loving and kind. He is faithful to a thousand generations. He is in fact our creator and loves us like a parent loves a child.

PPT: The second way God reveals himself to us is through his immeasurable mercy and compassion.

Remember verse 19? "For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." God stands out here because his mercy and compassion are endless. Our world doesn't work that way. But God does. He reveals himself to us personally by offering these attributes to us over and over again.

Mercy is when we get a second chance, even when we don't deserve it.

Compassion is when we see someone who needs help and we help them.

We don't have to imagine what it would be like to experience God's mercy and his compassion. In fact, getting a second chance, would be pretty high on my bucket list.

There's a woman in scripture who had the great fortune of being on the receiving end of God's compassion and mercy. Let's read a story from John 8:3-11. (Some early manuscripts don't have this story)

PPT:

3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

PPT: Artistic Picture of Passage (To be displayed while I'm expositing it)

Lets dig into this passage for a moment. Now before we get to the woman, let's talk about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. They were the religious leaders of Israel during Jesus' time. It's fair to say that they didn't like Jesus. To them, he was a lawbreaker, yet he didn't break God's laws, rather the system of laws that they set up to help them not break God's laws. Ironic. He wasn't legalistic enough for them and he was gaining popularity among the people. They didn't like Jesus stealing the affections of "their" people. So what do they do? They set up a trap.

Now, how about this woman? She's brought before Jesus and accused of adultery. Scripture says they made her stand before the group. What do you think this moment was like for the woman? (humiliating, scary, rock bottom, embarrassing, worry, regret, sorrow, thoughts of her husband and maybe kids, life will never look the same, broken trust)

To these religious leaders, is this really about the woman? No, they want to trap Jesus. They tell him all about the Law of Moses. They are referring to Lev. 20:10 which says, "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death." So they ask Jesus, "Now what do you say?"

Wow, they thought they had him trapped. If Jesus answered stone her he would be arrested for breaking the Roman law which forbid Jews carrying out death sentences. If he answered with mercy and forgave her, "Don't stone her," he would be guilty of not supporting the law of Moses.

But Jesus knew this was a trap. Notice the Law of Moses again. "Both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death." So one obvious question is, where's the man? Why isn't he standing before Jesus and the crowd? Some commentators believe the whole thing could have been a set-up. Was the man paid off and let go? If that's true, then I would just like to point out that the religious leaders of Israel were just as guilty of sin as the man and the woman.

Either way, here stands the woman who committed adultery, alone, fearful, before a crowd of angry men with stones in their hands and self-righteous looks on their faces ready to launch.

And here is where God reveals himself to us through compassion. Jesus sees this woman who needs help and he helps her. Picture her standing there without a friend in sight. Have you ever been in a situation when no one's on your side? Jesus takes a stand for her. Jesus helps.

PPT: Artistic rendition of Jesus writing in the sand

Who knows what Jesus wrote in the sand? It's fun to speculate. Maybe the word, "Hypocrite or Mercy." No one knows, but what we do know is that he helps this woman (has compassion on the woman) by finally answering the Pharisees question, "Jesus, what do you say?" "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

PPT: (Back to Artistic picture of passage)

All the accusers walk away. Brilliant Jesus. Notice who doesn't walk away? Could Jesus have thrown a stone? Absolutely! He is the only one there without sin. But here is where we see God reveal himself to the woman and to us with Mercy. Remember, mercy is when you get a second chance, even when you don't deserve it. Jesus demonstrates mercy revealing his true nature to this woman by giving her a second chance. He says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." He shows mercy by calling her to repentance, giving her a second chance, and sending her off to live a righteous life.

God reveals himself to us through mercy and compassion. We need help and God longs to help us like he helped this woman. We need second chances and God is ready to receive repentant hearts that want another shot.

For some of you tonight, maybe mercy and compassion are pretty high on your bucket list. And you would like to ask God for help or for a second chance. There's no situation God can't help you with. There's no past event in your life that Jesus can't forgive you for. God wants to reveal his attributes, his Mercy, and his compassion to you tonight. A little later, we're going to have a time of prayer and you will have the chance to encounter God and let him reveal himself to you.

PPT: Finally, the third way that God reveals himself to us is in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate way God chooses to interact with us.

In Matthew 1:23 baby Jesus is called Immanuel, which means, God with us. God interacting with us. What greater way for God to reveal himself to us than to come here in person. In the person of Jesus. To become a man. To walk among us. To walk with us, just like he did in the garden. In Jesus, God came to reveal himself.

Jesus revealed himself as an authoritative teacher, a man that loves and cares for the blind, the sick, and the outcast, he touches lepers and gives them hope, he hung out with the “cast out” people of society like the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, the paralyzed, he cured the sick with a touch or from a distance, he called people to repentance and shared the truth of God, he healed the possessed, whole towns would come and seek him out, he’s the giver of everlasting life, he raised the dead, he gave value and dignity to women and the poor, he forgave sins, he restored those who felt far from God, he recognized and rewarded faith, he healed an important official’s daughter and an outcast woman who had been bleeding for 12 years, he hates pride and praised humility, he ate dinner with thieves and harlots, he hung out with a fisherman, he came not to call the righteous but sinners, he came not to be served but to serve, he’s the king of the kingdom of God, he calms the wind, he stills the waves of crashing storms, he exercises thousands of demons, sends spirits into swine, he gives authority to others, he feeds 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish, he walks on water, he speaks against hypocrisy, he gives sight to the blind, he catches fish in numbers that sink boats, he clears the temple for all to worship, he authors the phrase love your neighbor as yourself, he is betrayed and arrested, he is beaten senselessly, he’s murdered on a cross, he rose from the dead, and he calls himself I AM.

God revealed himself to us through Jesus. Immanuel came to be with us and give us good news. Our God, finding a way to make it all right again. Listen now to this good news:

Video: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/gospel-outline/big-story-tutorial-video>

Video Summary:

God created us for good. He looked at us (his creation) and said we were very good. Initially we had a great relationship with God. And why not, God is so loving. Over time, we started to want things that God knew would not be good for us. But we wanted them anyway. So we told God to shove off and we sought after the desires of this world and got into trouble. The world became messed up and our relationships with each other and with God became messed up. Today we see a hurting and dying world in need of a God to reveal himself and save us. And God did just that. He came to us in the person of Jesus and offered us a message of repentance and forgiveness of sins, and an opportunity to trust him again with our whole lives to restore us back to right relationship with him, each other, and the world. But this wasn’t done without a cost. Rather than us paying the price for our wrong doing and rebellion, God in the person of Jesus, paid the price and gave his life by dying on a cross for our sins and the sins of the world. And because he’s God, three days later, he raised to life, conquering death, and now offers each one of us new life with Jesus as Lord.

God revealed himself through Jesus. And the reason why CAN be found in John 3:16. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

What if some items on your bucket list are there because you believe they will bring fulfillment and purpose to your life. Yes, we try them and seem happy for the moment. But we quickly realize that feelings fade and we find ourselves back in the places we were before. The truth is, only an encounter with Jesus can bring true satisfaction to our lives.

Jesus came to bring us back and restore our relationship with Him. The things we put on our bucket lists don't even compare to the character, mercy, and compassion of Jesus.

Tonight we are going to have a time of prayer. It will be a time for you to encounter God—the God who wants us to know Him personally. He has revealed himself to us. What he wants from us is to seek Him out—he wants us to want to know Him!

Invite up worship team:

So remember the three ways God revealed himself to us:

God revealed his character to us and it is good. He is the God who is slow to anger. He is filled with unfailing love. He is faithful and he forgives. He is the God who is lavishly (wasteful) with his love to a thousand generations. So tonight, if your heart longs for a God who will love you like no other and wants to be with you through every life adventure, then come have an encounter with God in prayer tonight.

God revealed his mercy to us. Mercy is when you get a second chance, even if you don't deserve one. So tonight if you need a second chance, even if you don't think you deserve it, come have an encounter with God in prayer tonight. There's nothing you've done that is beyond God's forgiveness. Bring your wrongs to him tonight and marinate in his mercy.

God revealed his compassion to us. Compassion is when we see someone who needs help and we want to help them. God wants to help you. Like the woman who was brought before Jesus, He will take our hurts, our loneliness, our feelings of shame, our pride, our low self esteem, our memories and pain of others making fun of us, our lack of acceptance, and he will call us to come to him and receive his compassionate help which is the real source of true joy. So tonight, if you need help, then come have an encounter with God in prayer.

God revealed himself to us through the person of Jesus. He came to be with you. To walk with you. To reveal who he is and what he is like. To love you, to comfort you, to forgive you, to encourage you, to restore you, and to use you to change the world. He gave his life for you to bring you back into right relationship with him. So, tonight, if you want Jesus and all that a life with him offers, then come have an encounter with God in prayer.

So those are the three ways God has revealed himself to you. And now here's the best part. He revealed himself to you because he wants YOU to make "Knowing Him" the top item on your bucket list. He wants YOU to want HIM. He wants to be our number one priority. The God of the universe wants to be in relationship with us. Why? Because YOU are number one on HIS bucket list.

Some of you are not Christians but tonight you feel Jesus moving inside your very soul wooing you to his good character, compassion, and mercy. You want to make an encounter with Jesus number one on your bucket list. If that's you, then stand up, walk to the back of the room, and ask for prayer. Say, I want to become a follower of Jesus!

Some of you in here tonight may have walked away from Jesus. Tonight it has become clear that you no longer seek after Jesus, but after bucket list items that fall short of his good character, compassion, and mercy. If that's you then stand up, walk to the back of the room, and ask for prayer. Say, I want to re-dedicate my life to Jesus?

Some of you may be dealing with some hard things right now.

Some of you may think your relationship with Jesus feels dry and it's not going anywhere.

Some of you, like Moses, may feel like when it comes to your relationship with God, you want more.

Whatever you may be feeling, stand up, walk to the back of the room, and have an encounter with God in prayer.

Amen!