

El Shaddai

The Names of God series #6

by Chris Famisaran

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you, Lord, for the opportunity now to gather together to open the Word. Be with us as we talk about our final topic in our Names of God series. In Jesus' name, amen.

Mary Sutherland wrote, I believe it was an article or a book called "Unleashing the Power of God in My Life: Peace." She has a son by the name of Jared, who when he was a little boy, they taught him to remember the phone number of where they lived and an address in case they were ever lost. Which, by the way, kids, if you have phones at this point, if you have a cell phone, consider yourself lucky and privileged because you know what I had when I was not until even in college? I had no personal cell phone. You have a resource that is so great and so powerful. Wield it carefully.

Yet, how many of you kids actually know your own phone number? Eh, kinda. How many of you still have a home phone number? How many of you still have a landline or a digital "landline"? Some of you, right? But times are changing.

Now, Jared, he was walking with his dad one night. He and his dad, they would go for their pre-bedtime walk. And after a few minutes of silence, Mary's husband, Dan, kind of tried to test Jared's knowledge. "How far are we from home?" And Jared said, "I don't know." Typical child. And Jared, sorry, Dan said, "Well, where are you now?" He said, "I don't know." And dad kind of just good-naturedly said, "Sounds to me like you're lost, son." Jared looks at his dad, Dan, and he says, "Nope, I can't be lost. I'm with you."

Oh. Same thing goes with our moms too. We're so grateful and I'm so grateful as well. My own mom came to see me on Mother's Day. So thank you, let's give her a hand. She had to raise me and I more than adequately put a few gray hairs on her. So I apologize for all of my horrible things I did in the past for the most part. I'm kidding, I do, I'm sorry. But no, I'm so grateful my own mom is here. And also, you know. It doesn't take a mom to actually be, have a physical child. Many of you,

perhaps those who stepped up when there wasn't a mom to be around, became a bonus mom. I also want to give you credit and thanks. Moms are important, and dads too. Parents are important because when you first come out of the womb, they have to care for you, guide you, feed you, clothe you, and protect you. Parents are a pillar in our life, hopefully. Unfortunately, not everyone has that experience. But I pray that if we're in doubt, if there is not, we find somebody who can love and care. May we be that place where we can have bonus moms and dads, bonus grandpas, bonus grandmas, bonus uncles, and aunts to help step into that void.

Today, we're going to go through the topic of El Shaddai. Many of you may have heard the song originally written by Michael Card but made popular by the great Amy Grant. Today, we're going to look at a few passages, primarily sticking to the narrative of Genesis, the patriarchs. But we're also going to, hopefully, if we have time, look at Moses in the book of Exodus, and if we have time as well, Ruth.

Now, how many times do you think El Shaddai is mentioned in the Old Testament? Take a wild guess. We're quiet today. 17, anybody else? 50, you're getting warmer. It's 48, with the most appearances in the Book of Job.

By the way, we are wrapping up our small group series this week. Next week is Celebration Sabbath, by the way. So those of you who've been in small groups, you know what's happening next week. It's called Celebration Sabbath, where those of us who've been studying along, or even if maybe you didn't join a group but have been studying, this is an opportunity next week to get together and share what valuable lessons you took from the last six weeks. Oh, in the fall, we're going to be looking at the Book of Job, shortly preceded by the Book of Daniel. I must be a glutton for punishment. But I look forward to our series in Job, and more than all the books of the Old Testament, El Shaddai is mentioned the most in Job.

So El Shaddai. Let's go to the book of Genesis, Chapter 17.

Now, what does El Shaddai mean? Can we translate it as Almighty or God Almighty? And we're gonna go back to several familiar stories, particularly from the Patriarchs. Genesis, Chapter 17. And I want to start at verse one.

God has already called Abram to leave, to go out. God has promised many things. And at verse one, when Abram was how old? 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty, walk before me faithfully and be blameless."

Okay, God Almighty, El Shaddai. Now it doesn't say El Shaddai here, but that's the Hebrew term though. And we translate it as God Almighty, walk before me faithfully and blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you, and you will greatly increase in numbers. Covenant meaning our agreement.

Abram fell face down and said, "As for me, this is my covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram. Your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will come to you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and your descendants after you, for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you, and I will be their God."

It's a bold statement. Amen. And how old was Abraham? Prime child-rearing age. Amen. Some of you are laughing. Now let's also keep this in context. How old was, as she was known at that time, Sarai, his wife? 90ish years old, 89. She was 10, I believe she was 10 years younger. Also, again, a wonderful prime time for child-rearing days. Amen. How many of you as moms would love to have a child at 89 years old? Nonsense, right? But yet God has made a covenant, a promise, kind of like a contract. You're not just going to have kids, you're going to have a plethora of many children in this land where you're at. I will give it to you and your descendants.

Now, one of the things that we've learned is that, sorry, El Shaddai can be translated as Almighty, but also El Shaddai is faithful. Now, we don't have time to go through the whole story of Abraham. But what we do know is that, for those of us who know this story, was God faithful? Did God give Abraham a child? Yes. Did that child have a child? Many children actually, 13 to be exact that we know. And so it's true that the descendants of Abraham, there were many. Eventually, you find out, unfortunately, several years later, they become enslaved in Egypt, and they're enslaved for over 400 years. Then God calls them out into the wilderness.

But yet even still, as we continue to read that story in the Old Testament, God shows his faithfulness to care for and preserve God's people, Abraham's children.

Let's look at another story of El Shaddai with Abraham's son Isaac. Let's jump over to chapter 28, verses one through five. We're going to continue on in this theme of faithfulness. Sorry, yeah, Isaac when it calls for Jacob. Genesis 28, verses one through five. Okay, all right, here we go. Verse one. So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him, "Don't marry a Canaanite woman. Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father, Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. May God Almighty, El Shaddai, bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." And then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban, son of Bethuel, the Aramean, the brother of Rebecca, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau. So he goes, Jacob finds a wife, marries. And how many kids does he eventually have? We know of at least what, 12? Jacob had how many boys? 12 boys and Dinah. And out of that, many, many, many more kids. So did God hold true to his word? Yes, he did.

Later on, Jacob becomes, what is he then called? Israel. Let's jump to chapter 43. Isaac, now called Israel, has had many of his sons. And I believe this is towards the end of his life. Oh, sorry, not his life yet. Sorry, we'll get to that in a second. And there's a point now where Jacob's sons, or Israel's sons, did they all get along very well? Or was there, like everybody else, maybe a little internal sibling rivalry, deep-seated anger? What did some of the older siblings do to their second youngest sibling? Sent him off to be sold as a slave in Egypt. And eventually, what does he become? The prime minister, essentially. Other than Pharaoh, he was the person in charge.

And Israel, they need food. They need help. So he tells his sons, they don't know though that he's still alive. Let's go to 43 verse 11. It says, "Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be, then do this. Put some of your best products of the land in your bags and take them down to a man as a gift, a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double the

amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also and go to the man at once, and may God Almighty grant you mercy before him, so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, I am bereaved, I am bereaved.'" He's feeling immense grief.

"So the men, or the sons, took the gifts and doubled the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of the house, 'Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal, and prepare a meal they are to eat with me at noon.'

See, Joseph was testing his brothers also to see had they changed, had they repented, had they learned from the ways, had they learned from how they had treated him. And if you continue to follow the story, you'll see that God's providence is challenging as it was God was sending Joseph early to make sure that God's descendants would have a place to live, to have somebody to ensure that the people around would be able to make it through the good years and also the lean years when there was a drought, when there was less food. Sometime later, and let's go to chapter 48. Some time later, Joseph was told, your father is ill. So Israel or Jacob is now ill. So he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim with them. When Jacob was told, your son Joseph has come to you, Israel rallied his strength and set up on bed. God said to Joseph, God Almighty, El Shaddai, appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and there blessed me. And he said to me, I'm going to make you fruitful. and increase your numbers, I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants."

Is there a theme in this promise that he shares with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now Joseph? You'll be fruitful, and I will give you a place for your descendants. God Almighty is ensuring that they will be cared for. El Shaddai will care and protect you."

In spite of everything that Joseph experienced, he wasn't ready, nor would know exactly what would happen. In fact, for many years, he was jailed, he was served as a slave, a servant. And in that time, did God not make Joseph prosper? If you

continue to read the whole story, you'll realize that God was there even in the midst of tragedy, of heartache, of uncertainty, of unknowing what's happening.

Quickly, Exodus 6, 1-5, the Lord went to Moses and he reminds them in verse 2 of Exodus 6, God also said to Moses, I am the Lord, I have appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, as El Shaddai, God Almighty. But by my name the Lord, I did not make myself fully known to them. I will also establish my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan where they resided as foreigners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are enslaving and I have remembered by covenants. You see sometime Later after Joseph had died after he'd served as prime minister. There was a new pharaoh who came into town and he basically said I don't know. He didn't know who Joseph was and all that Joseph had done for Egypt and all the Israelites Jacob's descendants and Abraham's descendants were growing in number and the Egyptians felt threatened. And when they felt threatened, what did they try to do? They tried to enslave them, even though there were many, they were fearful of being tried to be taken over. And so they're enslaved for 400 plus years. And in Exodus, God calls Moses to lead Israel out. And in chapter six, he reminds them, I am God Almighty. I have heard the groaning of the Israelites. I have remembered my covenant and I will take them out of Egypt.

One last area that perhaps maybe you'll remember where El Shaddai is mentioned is mentioned by Naomi. How many of you remember the story of Ruth? And early on in the story, what happens to Ruth's husband, sorry, Naomi's husband and boys? They all die. God Almighty, how could God Almighty else should I let this happen to me? Now, if you look at the overall story though of Ruth, we find that in Chapter 4, does Naomi's life end in sadness or does she find joy again? She finds joy again. So God is there. He is faithful, will care for and protect you and ultimately is merciful. Maybe we, again, we don't always understand the journey that we're going to take on, but God is faithful and God is merciful. What are some of the themes between these passages that God made a promise, a covenant, and upheld the covenant? Unfortunately, did all of the Israelites, did all the believers respond faithfully to God? No, because why? They're human. Do we also respond to God faithfully every time? We're human.

Yet we find another way of translating El Shaddai, one you could also say is God, the mountain. And when you think of mountain, what kind of thoughts, what kind of feelings are conjured up? Many of us know Mount Everest is the tallest mountain above water at over 29,000 feet. But believe it or not, Mount Mauna Kea on the Island of Hawaii, is a volcano that technically if you go underwater it's actually 33,465 feet, even taller than Mount Everest. Now, as a Christian, As we follow God, sometimes we don't always see the clear picture because Mount Mauna Kea above water, I think it's around 13,000 feet, but there's so much more below the surface. And when we follow and walk with God, do we always again understand the plan? No, some things are not always revealed nor do we understand how good God's grace and how God's faithfulness is. We just have to go by faith, but we have to have a strong foundation. Mount Mauna Kea, though it is only 13,000 feet above the water, has an even bigger base, an even bigger, stronger foundation than we could ever realize. And as we walk in faith. through prayer, through practicing our faith, we'll learn who God is and have a deeper and much bigger understanding of who God is.

Charles Wesley wrote, "I rest beneath the Almighty's shade. My griefs expire, my troubles cease. Thou Lord on whom my soul has stayed will keep me still in perfect peace." Amen. Do you ever feel inadequate? Do you ever feel uncertain? Do you ever feel like I'm not ready for this task? I'm not ready for this responsibility? How many of you moms, when you realize you are gonna have a child like, oh, I'm so ready for this, I have everything lined up? Yeah, you're laughing, Mom. Some of you plan to have kids and some of you, it's like, surprise. And through the experience of having your kids, especially the first kid, the first kid is what some people like to call the trial kid. The first couple of kids are trial kids. Now I'm the oldest of four. And the fourth one was also much younger than me. After my mom had the first three, they thought, okay, she's gonna be fine. She'll be good to go. No hidden resentment there at all. I'm kidding. I love my sister. I do. But if you had more than one, could you realize that over time, you're not gonna break this child immediately, right? You learn to grow, you learn how to feed, you learn how to clothe, you learn how to hold a baby. And by the second or third child, oh, okay, cool. We got this. Sometimes faith and following El Shaddai, they're gonna be bumps and bruises along the way. You're not gonna know everything perfectly,

but what does faith require of you? To believe and to go forward. Know that El Shaddai is merciful in his understanding and will help you to grow, to protect you.

How have you experienced El Shaddai in your personal life? My encouragement to you all, my friends, some of you may be feeling good, may be feeling confident because God has blessed you. That's awesome. Go forth with humility and confidence that God will lead you. There are some of us though, however, perhaps who are feeling uncertain right now. You're in a valley. And just like... The shepherd in Psalm 23. Does the shepherd avoid the valley and just let the sheep go into the valley? No, the shepherd walks in the valley. Some of you perhaps are feeling uncertainty. What are the next steps to take in my life? May El Shaddai, God Almighty or the mountain in your life, lead and guide you in all things. There's a time. maybe in your life right now where you're experiencing, how do I take the next step? It takes faith. Some of us may be grieving a loss. How do I move forward? Trust and believe.

So what does El Shaddai personally mean to you? God Almighty. I hope and pray that it comes up, what conjures up is strength, conviction, belief. In spite of everything that is happening, may we have certainty that God loves us, cares for us, protects us, is faithful and is merciful. This week, I want to encourage you, this week, pray that El Shaddai will faithfully lead and guide you every day. Amen? Amen.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, we know that you are good and your mercy endures forever. Forgive us Lord, of our thoughts, of our actions or anything that is not true and in line with you. Lord, help us to see all the things that you're doing. Help us to be thankful and grateful. And Lord, whatever is weighing down on our hearts, whatever the things that keep us up at night, that we can't sleep or feeling the uncertainty, Lord, replace those thoughts of uncertainty and fear. with your grace, with your joy, may we confidently but humbly follow you and to be a witness to others. In Jesus name, everybody said, Amen.

Happy Mother's Day.