

February 14, 2010 – Names of God – EL SHADDAI

For the past several weeks, we've been talking about the "Names of God." Each week, we've focused our corporate worship on God as He has revealed Himself through a particular, Biblical name.

So far, we've looked at the names YHWH, ELOHIM, & ADONAI.

If you've missed any of these worship reflections, remember that you can view them anytime online at our church's website.

Today, we're going to focus for a moment on the name EL SHADDAI.

If "EL SHADDAI" sounds familiar to you, it could be because Amy Grant recorded a Christian song called El Shaddai back in the 80's.

(actually, I looked it up, and this song was released in 1982. That's 28 years ago, which makes me feel officially OLD.)

EL SHADDAI is a Hebrew name for God that's usually translated in our English Bibles as "God Almighty."

But that translation doesn't really capture the nuances of this name.

We've already seen the Hebrew word EL, when we studied the name ELOHIM.

We learned that EL is a word that means "mighty" or "strong."

It's kind of a generic term for deity, and is usually translated as "god."

The roots of the word SHADDAI aren't completely clear.

(Again, I want to emphasize that I am NOT a Hebrew scholar *whatsoever*.

All I have is some good Bible software that allows me to dig into these original language words and consult a number of Bible commentaries and dictionaries.

I try really hard to avoid any "fringe" sources and stick with good, solid, conservative Biblical scholarship that is broadly accepted)

And I found that a number of reliable scholars seem to think that the root of the word SHADDAI is SHAD, a Hebrew word that refers to the female breast as a source of nourishment.

If this is correct, then EL SHADDAI would refer to the almighty God who nourishes and satisfies, the all-sufficient God who abundantly supplies.

And I found this interpretation fits *very* well with the way the Bible *uses* this name.

EL SHADDAI is often associated with God's blessings and sufficiency, with trusting Him to fulfill His promises, to be enough to supply every need.

The first occurrence of the name EL SHADDAI is in Genesis chapter 17.
This is right in the middle of the story of Abram, soon to be renamed Abraham.

25 years prior to this, God had appeared to Abram and promised to bless him, make of him a great nation through which all the families of the earth would be blessed. But Abram & his wife Sarai were an *old, childless* couple when God made this promise. And 10 years *after* this promise, they still had no children. The promise remained unfulfilled. By all human reasoning, this simply wasn't going to happen.

So Abram and Sarai decided to “help” God keep His promise.
(to find another way to meet this need apart from depending on God)
They hatched a plan for Abram to father a child by their Egyptian maid, named Hagar. They did this, and Hagar gave birth to a son, whom they named Ishmael.

As you might imagine, this created some friction in that household.
And it didn't really seem to be the answer they had been looking for.

Another 13 years go by. So it's been a total of **25 years** since God first made His promise. This brings us to Genesis chapter 17, where the Bible says:

Genesis 17:1-3, 6

...the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him,
“I am God Almighty (literally, “EL SHADDAI”)

This is the first time God has ever revealed Himself by this name.
And EL SHADDAI tells Abram:

I will make My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you greatly...
and you will be the father of a multitude of nations.”
I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you.”

So God is basically re-affirming His promise to Abram.
This is when God changed Abram's name to Abraham.
But Abraham is clearly struggling to trust God to accomplish this.
Because Abraham says to God:

Genesis 17:18-21

Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”
But God said, “No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac...”

As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will certainly bless him...
But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at
this time next year.”

God is saying to Abraham, “I know you think this is impossible! But trying to supply
this need on your own by fathering a child with one of your servants is NOT the
answer! You are not sufficient to fulfill My promise.

I am going to make nations and kings come from you!

Stop relying on your own efforts and trust ME, rely upon ME.

I am EL SHADDAI - the Almighty, All-Sufficient God!”

And here’s the thing – God was doing WAY more than Abraham had ever imagined!

This promise wasn’t just about giving Abraham a large family.

God was preparing the way for the Messiah! He wasn’t just going to supply a
multitude of descendents for Abraham. He was going to supply Jesus Himself!

I think this same sort of dynamic is at work our lives as well. God is doing a
BILLION things all at once, and we’re lucky if we know about one or two of them.

It’s *ridiculous* for us to think we understand everything God is doing!

We need to learn to TRUST Him! We can *rely* on Him!

He is all-sufficient to meet every need. He is EL SHADDAI.

But, you know... it’s one thing to agree with this in my head (hear the words & think
they’re true), but it’s a whole *other* thing to really, deeply believe this in my heart.
How do we *grow* in this - in the *faith* to trust God, to bring our needs to Him, and rely
on His sufficiency. His timing, His plan?

I think one way we grow in this is by *experiencing* it.

I think that, very often, God helps us to grow in our trust for Him by placing us in
impossible circumstances where we *HAVE* to depend on Him!

Situations that we are *powerless* to resolve on our own.

And we learn from *experience* that God can be trusted.

That He is sufficient for every need. That He is EL SHADDAI.

In Abraham’s life, he had to come to the end of his own strategies before he could
receive God’s promise.

And in the process, Abraham learned from experience that God can be trusted – that
He is faithful and sufficient.

And you know, you don’t have to be “Abraham” to experience this!

I can attest to the same thing in my own life.

My journey into worship leadership was an odd road, with lots of twists and turns, and lots of obstacles.

It began with just a sense that God was calling me to something.

He eventually brought me here to become a member at Gladeville, and over time it began to become clear to me that He was calling me towards worship leadership, and – at least, *I felt* – worship leadership at this church.

The problem was that not very many other people *agreed* with that conclusion. So there were several years of waiting, and wondering if I had understood God at all. There were several false starts and failed experiments, as I tried different things. There were times I felt very frustrated, and times I got really discouraged.

I finally reached a point where I had to admit that I was completely powerless to make this happen. God was either going to have to accomplish this, or it wasn't going to take place.

And I remember getting a sense of God asking me, “Phillip, could you be **satisfied** if I never gave you anything exciting or fulfilling to **do** for Me?

If all I wanted you to do was just love Me, could you be satisfied with that?”

And I finally reached a place where I could honestly say, “Yes, God, my relationship with You isn't ultimately about how You are going to *use* me or what You might *do* for me or through me. You are enough. Knowing You and loving You is enough.”

And it was at that point that things began to break through.

Insurmountable obstacles just disappeared. At just the right moment, God provided. Looking back, I can see how God used those years of waiting to shape me and prepare me and mature me.

But the bottom line is that God came through!

In *His* timing, in *His* own way, God provided.

He *demonstrated* to me that **He can be trusted**. That He is *trust-worthy*.

So, I look back on that experience, and it gives me tremendous confidence in God going forward!

He's provided before, so it's easier to have faith that He'll come through again!

My experience with God has helped me to grow in my trust towards God.

We need to come to *know* Him and *experience* Him as EL SHADDAI – the Almighty, All-sufficient God.

But if that's gonna happen, we've got to release some things to Him.

We've got to empty ourselves.

If you have a sense of need in your life today, if you're looking for satisfaction (and not finding it), if you're inadequate to deal with whatever you're facing – let me encourage you to bring your need, bring your dissatisfaction, bring your insufficiency to EL SHADDAI.

Worship Him by abandoning your strategies and surrendering to Him, looking to Him to satisfy your needs, in His timeframe, from His abundance.

Psalm 91 says:

Psalm 91:1-2

Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty (SHADDAI).

I will say of the LORD (YHWH), "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God (ELOHIM), in whom I trust."

PRAYER:

Father, You are EL SHADDAI.

An Almighty, All-sufficient God of inexhaustible riches.

We confess that we are needy. We are insufficient.

Help us to get over our preoccupation with ourselves and look to You.

You are more than enough to meet every need, to satisfy every longing.

You deserve our trust. You deserve our worship.