

**EL SHADDAI**  
**WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

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Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you today. The music this morning was an appropriate reminder of why we are doing this study because it emphasized the Father, the authority, the sovereignty, and the majestic of our God. That is why we are doing this series. I need to make a couple of announcements before we get started and I really hate to do it, because I feel like the music set us up for jumping right into the message. But I do want to just mention a couple of very quick things because it is hard to get everything communicated the way we want to communicate them.

First of all we are going into the month of September, so next week is Labor Day Weekend. Each month through the course of the year we have been doing part of our church mission and vision. We have been talking about 'living in community, investing in growth, finding your purpose and embracing the Great Commission,' which stands for L-I-F-E, and it is how we do things around here to try to keep us all on the same page.

We took the month of August off because we realized a lot of people were getting ready for school and their last vacations and so forth, but we are going to hit it again in September. We are going to give you a challenge because we are looking at the L again which is 'living in community.' One of the things we know is that part of living in community is getting together as family and as friends. Community can be built around something as simple as a shared meal. And Pastor Ben came out with what I think is just a brilliant idea, and so we are going to give you as a church this challenge. During the month of September, these four Sundays coming up, we would encourage you to at one point during the next four Sundays find someone and take them to lunch after church. All right?

Now ideally this is someone in your neighborhood, in your community, someone who may not go to church at all. Invite them to come to church with you and afterwards take them out to lunch. If you can't do that, then the second thing we want to encourage you to do is find someone who is new to Life Fellowship and say to them, '*Hey, I haven't got to meet you yet so would you go out to lunch with us next week after church?*' That is the second option.

The third option is this, find someone you don't know at Life Fellowship and invite them. So there are three really great options. The first one is find someone and bring them to church. Second, find someone new that is here at church and get to know them. And the third thing is find someone you don't know that comes to church here and invite them to lunch. During the next four weeks we hope you will find someone and connect because living in community is essential to a healthy body. We have been disconnected for so long and this is a time we can start this re-connection. Now if you want to exchange vaccine passports beforehand, I get it, okay, depending on where you are at in that whole journey.

The bottom line is that this is a great opportunity to connect. You could even invite them to your house for dinner if you want to. You could have a barbeque in your

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backyard or hit El Toro or one of the local restaurants, it doesn't really matter. And here is what we will do because maybe you are thinking times are tough right now, so if you will invite someone who is not a regular part of Life Fellowship, take them out to lunch, just bring us the receipt and we will reimburse you for it. Invite someone who is not part of Life Fellowship and if you are having a rough time but you really want to do this just bring us the receipt.

Now by the way don't go to 131 Main, okay? Have a little mercy on us because the next thing I am going to talk about is the budget. But take them to El Toro or Chili's where they have a 3 for 10 special and it is one of my favorites because they have a really good low carb meal. You don't have to do McDonald's; we do have standards here, but seriously this is how badly we want you to do this. We think this is an investment in you and in our community. So you are free to do that and we will give you instructions on that next week on how to do that. And I hope you will do this because I think this is something that will kick us into just a dynamite fall and we are excited about this fall because so many good things are going to be happening.

Now I need to speak about our budget and someone reminded me of this last week because we started our new budget year in August. We don't talk a lot about money here but I know some churches talk about their budget every week and they have signs up and everything. We don't do that, but we do try to keep you informed because we think that is important and we think that you want to know. So we just adopted a new budget which is about \$350,000 less than the previous year because Covid is real. We had to cut \$350,000 out of our budget, but we now have a budget that is very healthy and balanced. The cost of it if you break it out over the course of the year is \$40,000 a week. So that is our new budget amount and I tell you that because it is important to our church. It is all of our burdens. I tithe just like you do, and \$40,000 a week is what we need to come in. Hopefully we will be growing above that because it is time for people to start coming back to church. We are optimistic, but we just want to make you aware of that.

The last thing is this, I want us to just briefly pause and remember two groups this morning. First I want us to remember everyone who is being impacted by Afghanistan. Some of you have military family members, I have military family, and you know our hearts and attention have been drawn over there. But beyond that there are men and women on the ground there at this time that will not be alive this time next week. Some of them it is because they love Jesus, some of them because they have helped America, some of them because they are simply females, some of them because it is just going to be random. This has been a tough week in Afghanistan and it is going to be another tough week in Afghanistan.

Several of you have asked what we can do as a church. Our mission's team has decided during the month of September that we are going to receive an offering and we are going to help some of these Christian displaced families who are moving to the United States to get established. We have about ten different agencies we are looking to

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see who are the best to invest in, and we have a couple of leads of some who may be in our area that we may be able to help. So we are going to receive a special offering during September above and beyond our regular offering and it will go toward helping displaced Afghanistan families. We have people in the church who have already been very, very active in this as well as some of our former and current military folks. I just wanted you to be aware of this.

The second group I want us to think about is those who will be affected by the hurricane in Louisiana. It was sixteen years ago today that Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana and now we have Hurricane Ida heading there again. Some of you that are here today were displaced sixteen years ago and now you are in our church. And we need to remember the people there because this afternoon it is going to get really ugly there again. So let's just take a moment to pray on our own and then I am going to pray as well.

*Father, we are your people and we come before your throne the God of the universe, El Shaddai, the All Powerful One who cares. And we ask, Father, in a way that only you can align ourselves with your will in what you are doing. Father, we pray for mercy and grace in the lives of those who are suffering today, whether it is those in Afghanistan, the family of those who were murdered this week who were in our military, for those who are part of the underground Christian church in Afghanistan, for the women and the little girls who will suffer, for those whose faces and names we will never know but who are just as real and just as loved by you as we are, we pray for them today.*

*Father, we pray for those in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama today who will be impacted by the hurricane and Father we pray again for your grace and mercy in their lives. We pray, Father, that in the midst of the storm you will make yourself real. And again, Father, would we align ourselves with what you are accomplishing and that we will be reminded that the truth about you and your authority. And Father that this may be a time where we are drawn to you. Father, I pray that you will be with those who have needs today and that includes us as we come to this room during this hour, open your Word and look at you. Help us to see ourselves as you see us and then Father, help us to make the changes you desire for us to make. For it is in your name I pray. Amen.*

We will be in our Bibles this morning in the book of Genesis and Chapter 7. We are going to be looking at the first time that we see the name El Shaddai used in Scripture. I think most of you know this, and I have shared this over the years that I grew up in a branch of Christianity that would be considered fundamentalist or legalistic or uber-conservative. By that I mean we went to church four times a week. We went Sunday morning for Sunday school and morning service, Sunday night service, Wednesday night service, and then if you were a teenager you went again on Friday. If you had a ministry often that would be on Saturday as well. Then there was usually in the spring and the fall an eight day revival that went from Sunday to Sunday and we were there every service. I mean we were in church a lot.

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On top of that I went to the Christian school that met at the church. So that was my central point of life. We grew up in a very, very conservative community of believers. Now please understand that this is not a criticism; it is just what it was. In the family that I grew up in and the community that I grew up in there was absolutely no drinking, no smoking, no cussing, and no dancing. Those were just verboten and that is where we got started. There were a lot of other things like I didn't go to the movies, our television watching was very restricted, and that wasn't just because we lived in the country and only got two channels. We didn't get to just turn the TV on and watch anything. Often we might start a show and turn it off because those values contradicted ours.

I couldn't wear shorts for example. That was considered to be unseemly and vulgar. When I moved to Florida I got over that pretty quickly. Our music was super conservative. Drums were just of the devil. Again I am not criticizing this because I grew up in a wonderful home. My mother was an agent of grace in my life over and over again. I do not view God as some kind of intolerant narrow minded bigot, I want to say that. If I had to grow up any way again I would want to grow up the way I did. But I do want to say this, part of the danger of a legalistic environment is that we think of terms of conformity rather than transformative.

So in the conforming I had an incorrect view of God. And I want to hit on this because not only were we not cussing we weren't even getting close to cussing. I am from Missouri so 'cussing' means swearing in case you don't know that term. For instance in my house we didn't say 'gosh,' we didn't say 'golly,' we didn't say 'geesh,' because gosh and golly were forms of God, and geesh was a form of Jesus. And I have to tell you that has stuck with me. You still won't hear me say gosh, golly or geesh.

And again I am not trying to be legalistic, but here is where I ended up with it. I ended up with this - God's name is super special and when I use it casually it is a reflection that I'm not paying attention to His presence and authority in my life. And for me that is a reminder I constantly need. I constantly need someone tapping me on the shoulder saying, '*Dan, you are not in charge. Dan, you are accountable. Dan, it is not all about you.*' I believe that is why God gave us that commandment, "***Thou shalt not take the Lord your God in vain.***"

I asked myself the motivation. Why did I want to say golly? Why did I want to say gee whiz? Why do I want to say all these things? Part of the reason I wanted to say those things was because it made me cool like the world but without crossing this little line that I had made. I wasn't one of those people that could swear the bark off of a tree, but in some ways in my own mind I was good because I kept the line.

I remember the first time we were watching television one night and someone said, '*Oh my God,*' something that is pretty comfortable now. In fact I know pastors that say that routinely. They will say, '*Oh my God this,*' and '*Oh my God that.*' It is an

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expression to them or an exclamation of surprise. Or sometimes it is just, ‘*Oh God.*’ For me when I stop and reflect on that, if I talk like that it becomes vain because it is without thought, or it becomes vain because it is about me. It is because I have to relieve some stress or I am excited, I am angry or whatever.

It is interesting that I have never one time heard anyone say, ‘*Oh my Allah.*’ Have you ever heard that? Have you ever heard someone when they hit their finger with a hammer say, ‘*Oh Buddha damn it?*’ No one ever says that, do they? And you have to ask yourself why that might be. I will tell you my theory is this, because there is no name like Jehovah, there is no name like our God. If you are going to pull one down all of a sudden and say I am going to give it the nuclear explosion this time of all of the deities I could pull down it would be - God the Father, God the Son.

That is why I think this series is important. I want us at the end of this, and Ben wants us at the end of this, to have a new appreciation for the mystery, the wonder, the authority, the power, the depth, the uniqueness, the all-encompassing parts of He who is the great ‘I AM.’ And it is a daunting task. We picked an arbitrary number of weeks, we picked an arbitrary list of names for this series, but we could have preached every day for the rest of our lives and never mined all there is to be mined. But we are going to start this morning in Genesis Chapter 17 and the name El Shaddai. So let’s read it and then I will tell you why El Shaddai was one of the first names we picked. Listen beginning in verse 1.

***“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai, (that is what it says in the original Hebrew. We have it interpreted, translated here as God Almighty, but if you look in the original Hebrew this is the first time you will find in the Scripture where it says, “I am El Shaddai.”) Walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.*”**

***No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God”***

In this we have the beginning of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is when God reaches down unto His creation and chooses Abraham, and at ninety-nine years of age says to him that He will make of him a great nation. At ninety-nine years of age God says to Abraham that he will be the nation through which His son would be born and He

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will make Abraham's land great. His offspring will be as the sand on the sea and the stars in the sky. There will be more of them than he could ever count. And He will give Abraham a land as well. There will also be people that come from Abraham that through them will come the Savior of all mankind. This is that great promise; this is God saying to Abraham, *'There is hope. You are marred, you are broken, you are fallen, but there is hope.'*

There is hope for the damned condition of mankind and it comes in the person of Jesus Christ. There is hope through Abraham's seed. And in this moment God says, *'El Shaddai is who is talking to you.'* And so we need to figure out who is El Shaddai and why that is significant. Why is this one of the first names that we talk about? And if we were to ask you to name a name of God, there would be about three that come up very commonly and El Shaddai isn't one of them. Maybe you wonder where El Shaddai came from, and this may surprise some of you who are younger, but the popularity of this name came from a song.

Back in the 80s there was a pop artist, and I can't believe that Amy Grant is sixty years old, but Amy Grant was for Christians the Beyoncé of our time. And if you put a gun to my head I could not name you one Beyoncé song, but I could name you a bunch of Amy Grant's songs. In fact every year at Christmas my wife brings out the Amy Grant Christmas Album and I have to listen to that until I want to bring a gun to my head. (*Laughter.*) But my wife loves that. And Amy Grant, who is now a grandma and my own age by the way, was it. She was the first breakout Christian contemporary artist and one of her hallmark songs was 'El Shaddai.' I begged Pastor Jason not to sing that this morning because it is one of those songs that once it gets in your head it is stuck there. You will be singing it all day long.

Some of the words I remember are *'Age to age you are still the same, by the power of your name, I will praise you till I die, El Shaddai.'* There are other words in there that are Hebrew and I just slaughter them every time I try to pronounce them, so I just gave you the English words. And it was a beautiful song with a haunting melody and it became part of the Christian's vernacular.

Truly in all of Scripture El Shaddai isn't a particularly frequently used word. In fact all throughout the Bible some form of it is found about forty-eight times and I mean by all forms of it all but seven times it is just Shaddai and not El Shaddai. So in the Old Testament we have El Shaddai used five times in the book of Genesis, one time in the book of Exodus, and one time in the book of Ezekiel. So it is those seven times that we see El Shaddai out of all Scripture, and that is the name we are talking about this morning.

Now there are forty-one other times when it is just the word Shaddai. Particularly in the book of Job you will see it very frequently. The word 'El' precedes 'Shaddai' in this usage we are talking about this morning and it is probably related to the word,

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Elohim.’ And that is usually used in conjunction with other descriptive words which reference a particular aspect or characteristic of God, kind of like a determiner that points out things. For instance next week we are going to be talking about God as ‘El Roi,’ so the El is frequently used but it is almost like a doctor or a title that establishes something that you want to know about the person.

The word ‘Shaddai’ is very interesting. And I want to kind of tell you this really quickly because the last couple of times I have preached we went really deeply into analyzing and verse by verse and I am not going to do that this morning. We are going to talk in more general terms and then you can go and study it further on your own. But ‘Shaddai’ can mean several other things beyond what we might automatically think. The reason I tell you this is because it is not really a real settled issue among Hebrew and Jewish scholars, among people who are not Christians, people who just simply studied the Tora. Hebrew scholars who know the ancient Hebrew lexicon don’t come to a unanimous agreement on what the word ‘Shaddai’ means, or where it came from and so forth.

And I have read and read and read and tried to figure out where we are and I believe this. Even in the midst of a lack of complete clarity for what Shaddai means, and how it can always be applied, I think we see something about the complexity when we start talking about the names of God. And I think that needs to be a part of our overall theme to this series, and that is this: when we talk about God at any level whether it is His names, His characteristics, His quality or His appearance, all of the different parts there are about God, you never get to the end of it, you never get to the beginning of it, and you never get everything from it. He is just too big, He is just too complex and that is why He is God.

All we can do is take a few moments of time and try and try and try and try to gain knowledge and every time you will learn something more, you will learn something new, you will apply it in a fresh way, and you will walk away saying, ‘*and there’s so much more to learn.*’ That is the wonder, that is the mystery, and that is the power of God. That is why a series like this is so important. God is far too complex, too magnificent, too expansive, too comprehensive, too pervasive, and too vast to be confined to a single moniker. One name simply cannot do Him justice. A dozen names cannot do Him justice; a million names cannot do Him justice.

So like polishing a diamond we have to keep going back and back and back again to look into the jewel itself. And each facet is a new perspective, it is a new contextualization, it is a new context whereby we gain insight into who we worship, and who God is. And yet we never reach the end, we never complete the task; there is always another dimension to explore. This is part of the wonder of God. And we need to embrace that, we need to grasp that and we need to be constantly reminded of that.

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Let's pause here by the way and I want to remind you of something that Ben said last week that I think is essential, and I think it was so profound. We all have bad theology. Somewhere in all of us, I don't care how many degrees you have, I don't care if you are a professor at a seminary, I don't care how long you have been in the ministry, or how long you have been a believer, deep down in us all of us have a bad theology at some level. None of us have learned everything there is to know about God. None of us grasp it all and none of us apply it completely correctly, and we need to be aware of that because that keeps us searching and it keeps us open. So in that much of our bad theology is because of our lack of understanding of who God is, and what God does.

That is why last week Ben said something that I wrote down and I posted it on my Twitter feed because to me it was such an important quote. And it was this: *'Much of our bad theology comes from viewing God through our experiences rather than viewing our experiences from an accurate understanding of who God is.'* That is so important for us to remember because what we end up doing is recreating in our minds, not in reality but in our minds, the perception of God that makes us most comfortable, that affirms us, that makes us happy. And when we do that, we put the wrong person at the center of truth, at the center of attention, and to some extent at the center of what we consider our universe. We want a God who thinks like us, who acts like us, who prioritizes like us, who has an agenda that matches ours, who votes like us, who has our color skin, our accent, and our cultural values. That is the God that we want, and we spend far too much time trying to recreate God into the image of us than we spend trying to recreate us into the image of God.

So we need to remember this, we were created in His image and from that day to this we have tried to recreate Him into our image. How many times over the years have I heard, read, seen someone make a statement like this? *'I could never worship a God who lets children die of cancer. I could never worship a God who doesn't love gay people. I could never worship a God who is a Republican. I could never worship a God....'* And you fill in the blanks. I have literally heard all of those things said.

And I want you to understand something, in each of those statements is a fundamental misunderstanding of who God is, why we are here, what it is all about and the very nature of truth. And until we correct our approach to understanding God, we will never really find Him. There has to come a point, and I believe this is essential to salvation so don't click me off here, okay, there has to come a point where we surrender to God, where we empty ourselves, where we yield, and yes, where we repent and say, *'You are God, I am not, I am undone, complete your work in me.'*

Our president this week quoted from Isaiah and I heard it when he said it. He quoted from a verse that says, ***"Here am I Lord, send me."*** Politicians should never try to use Scripture. Now I hear this lot: *'Preachers should never talk about politics.'* I will concede that except for the fact that what you define as politics is not always politics; sometimes it is matters of faith and I will always be comfortable speaking about that. But

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aside from that, I will concede that politicians need to quit talking about faith because they almost always get it wrong. So this was in the political statement by the way, and this passage is when Isaiah was saying, *“Here I am Lord, send me,”* and it was not Isaiah volunteering to go fight a war. If you will read the context you will see that Isaiah said he was a filthy unclean man, he was undone and not worthy to be in God’s presence. It was an emptying of himself. He was saying, *‘I am so empty, so powerless, so nothing in front of you. Please just use me.’*

And if Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets that ever stood before God, got to that point where he said he was empty, he was undone, he was broken, he was unworthy, then how more should we be there today. And that is the very beginning of our journey with God. Folks, let me say this to you, you do not come to God with conditions. You come to God with total surrender. We do not justify our presence before God. When we are broken by our sin and the horror of our offense to God we can say nothing but, *‘Here I am Lord. Change me, transform me; you have broken me. Now turn me into what you have created me to be.’* And folks, in America, in our pious self-righteousness, in our self-sufficiency, in our cocky arrogance, we approach God wrong too many times. And in doing so we offend Him, we blaspheme Him and in every extent we damn ourselves until we get to the point where we will say, *‘You are God and I am not.’*

There is something God was doing when He came to Abraham and He was saying, *‘Look at me, look at me, Moses knew me as I AM, you know me as the All Powerful One, you are ninety-nine years old, you think your life is over and I am telling you it is just beginning. I am making you a promise, I am making you a covenant, I am making you a commitment and I can do through you whatever I want. And here is what I want; I want my Son to be born through your lineage. I have chosen you, Abraham, I am making you a promise right here and I keep my promises. Your son will be the father of a great nation. Your son, Isaac, is going to be who the Messiah comes through.’* And God began unfolding His covenant to Abraham.

I am always finding humor in the Bible and I have to tell you I found a little humor here. If you read the next eight or nine verses after this right after God gives the promise He says, *‘And by the way you are getting circumcised.’* It is like God was telling Abraham just how much authority He had in his life. *‘I am not going to give you a son just yet, but we are going to have surgery here shortly. You are going to bow down before me. And you are going to do things my way.’* And what did Abraham do? He said, *‘Bring it on, Lord. Please use me.’* And folks, we have to get to that position where we will throw everything out and say, *‘God, you are the All Powerful One and I am nothing. Use me.’*

Now let’s kind of circle back around. We will never know God at any level if we consistently view Him through the prism of our own desires and expectations, biases and demands, and definitions. So let’s learn something about the name of God. And by the way I want to say this real quickly because this is the professor in me and I have to make

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sure I cover all my bases. There are multiple interpretations that we are not going to look at closely this morning of what Shaddai means. Some have made the case that it means ‘God of the wilderness.’ Some have made the case that it means ‘God of the mountains.’ And there are some passages that use similar terms. One of the passages I really like goes back to the verse where it says, “*I am God Almighty, walk before me.*” Others have said El Shaddai means ‘the God who walks behind.’

Maybe they are basing that on “*The Lord is my shepherd,*” because where does the shepherd lead? He leads from behind the sheep to make sure there are no stragglers. So there is some beautiful imagery in some of their meanings, but sometimes you have to kind of twist it to make it fit. Some note that Shaddai, spelled with only one ‘d’ literally means ‘destroyer.’ So there are all of these different possibilities, but there are just two that are primary. And we are going to look at those. Number one is this – God is all powerful.

Repeatedly when we see the name of God translated into English it is God Almighty. And He indeed is the almighty one. He is the All Powerful One. It is related to the word, *shadad*, which means to overpower or to destroy and it refers to God’s absolute power. It is God who triumphs over every obstacle and over all opposition. He fights not for victory but from victory. He does not fight for power but from power. He is the All Powerful One. So that is the primary interpretation.

There is a second interpretation though that I think is very intriguing and which I could do a whole sermon just on this one. And that is this, God is our sustainer. Another way to say sustainer might be our nourisher. But God is our sustainer. Shaddai is also possibly derived, and there are many Hebrew scholars who believe this, from the word ‘*shad*,’ which was often used to describe a woman’s breast. And in fact it literally means ‘many breasted or multiple breasted one.’ So what is the breast in Scripture often referenced to? In this context it is almost always female who is nourishing children. We see that in Scripture. There is this element of God, this facet of God, one of His many diamond like facets that He is the provider, the nourisher, the sustainer. He is the one who is like a hen gathering her chicks. Remember in the book of Psalms where it talks about ‘*gathering His little ones under Him.*’

There is a great old hymn entitled, ‘Under His Wings,’ that is from that passage of Scripture in Psalms. There are some wonderful analogies that go with this idea that He provides for us, He protects us, He sustains us and He nourishes us. And it may come from the term ‘*shad*,’ or ‘*Shaddai*.’ God is indeed these things because we see that in other passages. He is our provider, supplier, and nourisher. His resources are sufficient for all who are His. We find in Him the provision and protection and satisfaction that a child finds in his mother. He is the all sufficient one.

So whether we are talking about God as all powerful, or God as our sustainer, both of these are significant, but how do we apply them and how do they make sense to

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us? When we refer to God Himself as El Shaddai we are to be reminded of His absolute refusal to be relegated to our comprehension, to our definition, to our limitations, to our expectations, and to our imaginations. And often what we do when we pray, when we think and talk about God, we do so from those limitations. *'I expect God to do this. I demand God to do this.'*

And in doing that we cheapen Him, and I want to say this, whether you say gosh or not, whether you say gee whiz, or whether you unload the whole barn and use the big one, or whether you simply in your mind diminish Him by your own imagination, limitation and expectation, we do an injustice to God that not only endangers and threatens us, but it separates us from His majesty, authority and ability. We cannot spend too much time, we cannot give too much energy, we cannot afford to limit our focus on who God is. We need to lift Him up.

And if you don't get anything else out of this series, I hope you will get that. He is as gentle as He is strong. His holiness is equaled only by His total rejection of wickedness. He will be exalted. He will be worshipped. He will be feared. He will be obeyed. He will be known. He will not be confined, defined, undermined, assigned or maligned by His creation. His love is immeasurable, His will is inescapable, His character is impeccable, His authority is unquestionable, His potential is undiscoverable, His compassion is inconceivable, His strength is unapproachable, His Word is immutable, and His mystery is imponderable. He is God!

And at times we must pause and put Him where He belongs on the throne of our hearts and the throne of the universe. He is God! He is El Shaddai! He is the All Powerful One! He is our sustainer! And we will never be what we can be as Christians, and we will never be as we should be as a church, we will never be as a nation, or as a people, or as descendants of the lineage of spiritual blessings we have through Christ until we put God where He belongs in our lives.

He is not a toy to be trifled with. He is not an idol that we can capture. He is not someone we should try to manipulate. He is the All Powerful One. We must reject this notion that we can recreate Him into something that we deem worthy of our attention, our worship, our sacrifice because our every effort to do that is blasphemous and insulting to the very essence of who God is, and for us it is the absolute height of arrogance. It is an understanding of who God is by definition by reality fully embraced that will leave us speechless, humbled, contrite, broken, crushed, shattered and submissive. While at the same time we are going to feel loved, encouraged, hope filled, restored, overjoyed, enriched, secured, nourished and significant.

And in this passage Abraham, an old man, broken down, childless, is blessed by the All Powerful One. In that moment he never felt more loved. In that moment he never felt more protected, more useful, more significant, or more sustained than when God in His majesty said, *'I choose you, Abraham.'* Now remember this, none of us in this room

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have chosen God. God has chosen each of us. And as surely as He had an agenda and a plan and a purpose for His promise to Abraham, He has a promise and a purpose and a plan for you and me as well. But we only accomplish that when we yield to Him. And when we don't mess it up.

And what is going on in the Middle East right now are the consequences of Abraham's not trusting God for who God is when he took the handmaiden Hagar and said, *'I don't see a son. My wife is old. I better do something.'* And Sarah said, *'Yes, take Hagar.'* And Abraham slept with Hagar and had a son named Ismael. And from Ismael we have the Arab nation. And from that day to this day we are reminded that when we interfere with God's authority and we interfere with His plan, the consequences are decimating. We need to watch out.

So where do we go? Number one – how do we interact with El Shaddai? First we yield to His sovereign authority. And I will say this to you with absolute clarity, until you and I come to a moment in our lives where we say we are sinners incapable of saving ourselves, we are sinners who are unable to secure one second of redemption of salvation apart from God, we are outside of God's will and God's plan and God's protection. Have you ever repented of your sin and your inability to save yourself and said, *'God, I need you?'* Because it is at that moment that real life begins for you.

Number two – be comforted by His sufficient provision. I will tell you that over the last eighteen months in particular, but it increases week by week, I have had more people come to me rattled by what is going on in the world. Whether it is the pandemic, or the civil unrest in our country, or all the drama around the election, or what was going on in Afghanistan last week, some of our people in our church had friends who lost their homes in the wildfires earlier this year, and now we have Hurricane Ida. Whatever it is it has been a time of great uncertainty and a lot of people are really rattled by it.

But you know when the disciples were all upset about what was going on, the uncertainty in what Jesus was doing; do you remember what He said? *'Hey guys, let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, don't you? Believe also in me.'* And then Jesus shared His plan: *'In my Father's house are many dwelling places. And if I go away I am coming back. Everything is going to be okay. I am the sustainer. I am the provider. You can feel secure.'*

If you read this Bible I don't care whether you are a pre-trib, mid-trib or Amillennialist, I don't care where you are in your eschatology, it doesn't get better at the end, and it gets a lot worse before it gets a lot better. So why are we surprised? Now is not the time for panic; now is the time for courage. Now is not the time for fear; now is the time for faith. Now is not the time for retreat; now is the time for offense. The days are short, the Word of God is true, and El Shaddai is every bit as powerful today as He has ever been. So we don't have to be fearful; we don't have to be shaken. We don't have to be concerned, we can be confident that El Shaddai has His plan and He is

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working it. And He doesn't need our permission, He doesn't need our approval, He doesn't need our endorsement, but He calls us to our action, faith and trust in Him. And that is where we are at today.

Number three – find security in His ability to save. If you believe God is who He is, if He is indeed the All Powerful One who sustains us, if He is that then you and I ought to be able to sleep, you and I ought to be able to have confidence, you and I ought to be able to have the peace that passes understanding because our security is not in who is in the White House, not in how much is in our 401k, not in how things are going around the world or the stability of the economy, our faith, our hope, our confidence is in He who cannot change. And that is El Shaddai, the All Powerful One, the sustaining one.

Number four – anticipate demonstrations of His authority in our lives. You need to anticipate in your life that there are periodically going to be times when you don't understand God. And sometimes that will be good and sometimes that will be bad, but in the midst of those demonstrations of His authority in our lives we ought not revisit who we worship, who we trust, who we believe. During good times and bad times He is still El Shaddai. In times that are clear to us and in times that are confusing to us, He is still El Shaddai. When you are unemployed or when you are fully employed, when your family is going great and when your family is breaking your heart, when you are rich or when you are poor, when you are healthy or when you are sick, He is still El Shaddai and He is worthy of our trust. And from time to time things are going to happen in our broken world that will cause us to need to cling to Him and trust in Him and to receive His authority with submission.

Number five – trust Him to accomplish His will on earth and plan for our lives. We need to understand that sometimes we aren't all it. Sometimes we are not going to understand Him. Sometimes because we live in a broken world and the big picture is eternity we are going to be uncomfortable, we are going to feel forgotten, and we are going to say, '*God, what in the world are you doing right now?*' But we don't have all the perspectives, and there are times when we have to trust that He is accomplishing His will for all of mankind in the universe in His discretion with His all encompassing authority.

Number six – refuse to view Him as less than almighty. Let us hold His name in reverence, but more importantly let us hold His authority in reverence as well. Let's hold our feelings accountable to the fact of El Shaddai. Let us align our passions, our impulses, our lusts, our goals, our ambitions, priorities and desires in Him.

And when we do that we can do number seven which is – rest in His absolute authority. He is El Shaddai. He is the All Powerful One. He is the sustainer. **HE IS EL SHADDAI!**

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*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*