

God has a Name

5/26/24

El Shaddai – Genesis 17

Sunday AM

Have you ever run into someone from your past who knew your name but for the life of you – you couldn't remember their name? This happened to me this week. I ran into a guy I hadn't seen in years, and immediately my brain was frantically running thru my mental rolodex trying to remember his name – to no avail.

NOW – I'm sure I've told you this, but I'm not very good w/ names. It's not personal, I just struggle w/ remembering names. One time, I was baptizing my father-in-law, and in the moment... his name escaped me! I don't know why... but it did. BTW – since he's likely watching online from TX – his name is DOUG!

Knowing my issue, when we lived in TN, a friend invited me to lunch and decided to have some fun at my expense. As we sat down, he had one of his buddies, who I didn't know, show up at the restaurant and act like he knew me from MS. Talk about being put on the spot! I didn't know his name and his face didn't ring a bell.

Well... as I've thought about these incidences and this series, I thought about how at times we respond to God when He suddenly shows up in our lives. We're stunned, uncomfortable, grasping for the name of the One who has invaded our space. Who is this God crowding my life in an attempt to connect w/ me? Well, the best way to get to know God – is to learn His name(s) b/c they reveal His true identity, nature, and character.

If you're just joining us, we're studying God's name to learn about who He is and wants to be in our lives.

Names are important! They identify who we are and speak to our nature/character. And like you – *husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, boss, employee* – God has many names to personify who He is and wants to be in our lives. In all, there are some 967 different names in the Bible to reveal to us who God is.

God gave us His name to help us to **KNOW** Him and **TRUST** Him. He gave us His name to **REVEAL** to us His person/character to **RELATE** to us so that we might know/walk w/ Him.

So far, we've been introduced to *Elohim, Adonai, and El Elyon* – today I want us to talk about – **El Shaddai**.

The name **El Shaddai** is familiar to most Christians b/c it was made popular by the song that we just heard – but what does it mean and how is relevant to us?

The name ***El Shaddai*** is found **48x** in the O.T. showing up for the 1st time in Genesis 17 w/ Father Abe, yet the most predominant use of the name is found in Job.

El – (God) – almighty/powerful and **shad** – (breast) – referring to the nurturing relationship a mother has w/ her infant child whom she nourishes/satisfies.

While often translated as ***God Almighty*** – El Shaddai means the **God who is all-sufficient to satisfy**.

This raises an obvious question – what will it take for you to be truly satisfied? Who will step in to gratify your soul and alleviate any anxiety you feel?

From heaven's point of view, the answer is – ONLY God! **Only the *El Shaddai* can truly satisfy your soul**. So, if you're looking for ***someone*** or ***something*** other than God to quench your soul thirst, then you're certain to be disappointed b/c you're looking for love in all the wrong places. Truth is, the things of this world might bring you temporary elation, but as Jesus expressed to the women at the well – ONLY the living water of God can truly satisfy your soul.

But LBH – we will seek any number of earthly offerings in an attempt to quench our thirst. Yet neither *pride, prestige, power, possessions, passion, pleasure, or painkillers* can ever fill the void found in the human soul b/c more will never be enough!

Is this not the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12? In the parable, a man tears down existing barns to build bigger ones so that he might have more room to store his wealth. Then, thinking that he had arrived – he said, “I’ll take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry!” Yet God called him a fool b/c he missed the point of life thinking that he could quench his soul thirst w/ the temporary things of this life.

Wasn’t this Jesus’ message to his disciples at Caesarea Philippi in Luke 9?

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

When I served as a single adult pastor, I watched single after single settle for less than God’s best b/c they so desperately wanted to be married thinking marriage would satisfy them. I’ve seen people accept jobs b/c of the status/wealth they thought it’d bring them to satisfy them – **but it’s never enough.**

Listen – In God’s name, *El Shaddai*, we learned that the insatiable ambitions/appetites of our flesh can never be satisfied by the things of this world but only by the *El Shaddai* who is more than enough.

This is the question God had in mind for Abe in Genesis 17 – and it’s the lesson we need to learn today.

In **Genesis 12** – We’re introduced to a man named Abram. For some reason unknown to us, God chose to bless Abram by promising to make him a great nation.

The Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people, and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; all peoples on earth will be blessed thru you.” Genesis 12:1-2

So God made a promise to Abe. Unfortunately, like us, His faith was proven flawed very early in the journey when he lied to the Egyptians by telling them his wife was his sister. Instead of trusting that God could satisfy him, and afraid for his life, he pimped out his wife to save his life – yet God was faithful to His promise.

Fast forward a few yrs, and Abe/Lot have entered the promised land w/ so much stuff that they have to separate. Soon after (as we discussed last week), a group of kings go to war against each other – taking Lot’s clan captive. So, Abe rounds a posse of 318 men to rescue Lot from Kedorlaomer – and as we learned, *El Elyon*, the Most High God – goes before him to route some 10k troops.

After God miraculously moved yet again in Abram’s life w/ the defeat of 10k troops, in Genesis 15, God reminded God that he/Sarai were still childless – **and unsatisfied**. So, God takes Abram out under the stars and reminds him of His promise by cutting a covenant.

Well... just when things are looking up, Abram blows it again. Instead of waiting on the Lord to satisfy him, he once again jumped ahead of God b/c apparently, *the God who needs no help needed Abram’s help*. So, he/Sarai concocted a plan involving their Egyptian slave, Hagar that resulted in the birth of Ishmael. So, yet again, *Abram’s faith failed b/c he sought to find his satisfaction from something other than God.*

BTW – do you know what happens when you decide that God needs your help? Ishmaels are born in your life.

This brings us to **Genesis 17** – Abe is now 99 and it's been some 24 yrs since God made His promise to make him a great nation – and 13 yrs since Ishmael was born. Yet according to God's sovereign timing, Abe is right where God needs him to finally satisfy Abe's soul.

When Abram was 99, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El Shaddai; walk faithfully before me and be blameless. Then I will make a covenant b/w us and I will greatly increase your numbers." Abe fell facedown, and God said, "As for me, this is my covenant w/ 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 from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting bond b/w me/you for the generations to come after you, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The land of Canaan b/w me, 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. As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant w/ you and your descendants, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised as a sign of the covenant b/w us. For the generations to come, every male among you who is (8) days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought w/ money – those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought w/ your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who hasn't been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." Abe fell facedown and laughed saying, "Will a son be born to a man 100 yrs old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of 99? If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" Then God said, "Yes, but your wife will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant w/ him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of 12 rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish w/ Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." When he had finished speaking w/ Abe, God went up from him. On that day Abe took Ishmael and every male born in his household or bought w/ his money in his household and circumcised them, as God told him. Abe was 99 yrs old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was 13; Abe and Ishmael – and every male in Abe's household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised that very day.

So, after 24 yrs of exhibiting a ***can-I-trust-you-God-b/c-apparently-you-need-my-help*** faith – Abe finally appears to be ready to find his satisfaction in/from God alone. How do I know? B/c he instantly responded to God that very day!

Question – how long is it going to take, and how many goof-ups are required from the school of hard knocks before you will stop fighting against God and start trusting that He alone is the one who satisfies?

For Abe – it was 24 yrs! It's as if God asked Abe – are you done yet? Are you finished fighting me? Are you done trying to figure it all out on your own and trying to find satisfaction in what you can do or attain?

Do you realize what's happened? God took Abe on a 24-year journey to help him find the end of himself so that he might discover the beginning of God. It took 24 yrs for Abe to recognize that God alone was his El Shaddai – the only one who was all-sufficient to satisfy.

Let me quickly summarize God's point and offer you a few principles to be gleaned from this passage.

Thru-out Abe's life, like us, Abe felt the inclination to help God accomplish God's will – never truly grasping until 24 yrs later – that **God helps those who are helpless to help themselves**. That is, God has to bring us to the end of ourselves so that He can show us that only He is able to truly satisfy our souls.

In Abe's case, God waited 24 yrs for Abe to become *impotent* and Sarah *barren* to set into motion His grander plan. Thru Abe's lineage, God chose a people to bring about the redemption of fallen humanity. His story is a precursor of God's plan to offer a Messiah to satisfy the greatest need of every soul – salvation/forgiveness.

Look at the parallels:

- Isaac arrives by miraculous birth – so too does Jesus
- Isaac is offered as a sacrifice – so was Jesus
- God provided a ram in the thicket – God provided a lamb on an old rugged cross
- Circumcision relates to cutting of sin from the heart

God purposed thru Abe – at the very beginning, to work His sovereign plan of redemption thru him – yet it required God to take Abe thru a pruning process to help him to become a willing vessel of grace.

God does the same in our lives. He's always working on bigger things in, thru, and beyond us for His glory.

What is essential to discovering this amazing grace – we too have to come to the end of ourselves so we're willing to look to God for our salvation/satisfaction.

Second – we have to learn that *God has to work in us before He can work thru us*. This is God's way.

God sheltered Moses during a time when boys were being killed by Pharaoh. His mom set him afloat on the Nile to be rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter – who turned to Moses' mom for help. He then grows up in Pharaoh's home w/ all the rights/privileges of Egypt. All the while, God was working a bigger plan Israelites from Egypt. Yet Mo, taking matters into his own hands to help God out, initiated the “kill an Egyptian a day” plan. So, God had to take Moses away for 40 yrs to prepare him, Pharaoh, and Israel-to-be for the Exodus.

God often has to do the same for us. He has to pull us to the side to prepare us for His purposes in the future for His glory. He set *Elijah* to the side. He set *David, Daniel, and Paul* to the side. He set *Abe* to the side – and HE will set you to the side too to prepare you for His divine and necessary purposes.

BTW – the time God has to place us in the wilderness on the backside of nowhere to prepare us is always proportionate to the task He has planned for us.

Moses (40 yrs); Paul (17 yrs); and Abe – 24 yrs. Why? B/c God can't work thru us until He's worked on/in us.

This brings us to a final lesson that we'll delve deeper into in a few weeks when we discuss the name *Jehovah Jireh* – **God is all you need when you need Him**. That is – God is never too early or too late, but perfectly on time according to His sovereign will.

God showed up when Abe was 99 and was no longer able to humanly satisfy his ambitions to show him who was really in charge and could satisfy. He showed us to accomplish His will/plan in/thru Abe – **which is where true satisfaction is found**.

He showed Abe and us that God isn't just all you need – He is all you need when you need it! He will be faithful to His promises and affirm His Purpose in his people in His time according to His will and purposes.

What's required of us to be satisfied by El Shaddai?

A It requires Humble **REVERENCE**

God requires that we bring our lives under His complete authority willing to believe that He knows what He is doing even though we don't always like it or understand it. Like Abe, ***we fall face down in humble dependence.***

That is what is so amazing about Job. In Job, you have a *rich, righteous, and religious* man who honored God – yet when everything was taken away – instead of folding, he still honored God – in fact, he praised God.

Then Job fell to the ground in worship... The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. And in all this, Job did not sin by charging God w/ wrong-doing. Job 20-22

WHY? It's b/c Job recognized early on that it's not the stuff of this world that meets our soul needs – it is only God who can truly satisfy the human soul.

B It requires a Faithful **RESPONSE**

It requires trust/faith. It requires that we place every area under God's care. In vs. 9-14, God required Abe to affirm his faith by **circumcision** – but not just him, but everyone born of him and bought by him.

Talk about a strange ask – yet it was laying down a gauntlet of trust. But it wasn't just for the moment but for the future too as in salvation, we experience God's covenant w/ a circumcision of the heart.

Funny – did you hear about (2) 11-year-old boys at the hospital about to go into surgery? One boy asked the other one, "What are you here for?" He said, "Oh, I'm getting my tonsils out, and I'm kind of scared." The 1st kid said, "I had that last year, it's no big deal. They put you to sleep – and when you wake up, your throat hurts a little, but they give you ice cream/popsicles for a week. It's no big deal at all." The other boy said, "Whew, that makes me feel better." Then he asked, "What are you here for?" He said, "I'm getting a circumcision." The other boy replied, "Oh, I had that when I was a baby. I couldn't walk for a year!" It's a big deal.

Anything God has done, He can do **IN** you. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do **HERE**. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do **FOR** you too. *Tozer*

Don't miss the significance of God's name El Shaddai. God is telling us that only He can truly satisfy the thirst of our souls. But to find this satisfaction, we have come to the end of ourselves and our ambitions to find the beginning of God. In doing so, we will quickly learn that that true satisfaction isn't found thru earthly means but only thru God – who alone is more than enough.

For Abe (and us) – when we learn that we have nothing left but God, then we become aware that God is enough!

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1