



Knowing God by Name

Lesson 4 ~ El Shaddai – God Almighty

Genesis 17:1-23

♥ Heart Talk

When you meet with your small group, share something about your continued experience of **being silent for 5 minutes before God** OR share something about the **Heart Therapy Exercises from Lesson 2 or 3**; *using music, giving God some undivided attention in praise and worship* or *writing a letter to God expressing your desire to trust his Word rather than your feelings or circumstances*. Did you sense God saying anything to you? How do these exercises help you *experience* God? Are you taking time to do the **Heart Therapy** exercises? To be *silent before God*? If not, why not? Ask others in your group if they find the exercises meaningful.

Introduction

El Shaddai (el shad-DI) is translated **God Almighty** in English and is found about 50 times in the Old Testament. At first glance, we might think that this name for God means the same thing as *El – God of Power and Might* that we studied in Lesson 2. However, *Shaddai* means another type of *power and might* than the name *El* means. The **Almighty** of *Shaddai* means specifically that God *has the power to keep his promises* or that God *has the power to do what he says he will do* – especially if the promise seems *humanly impossible*.

Shaddai derives from a similar Hebrew word, *shad*, which means **breast**. *Shaddai*, then, is a wonderful metaphor, presenting God as the one who **nourishes, supplies** and **satisfies**. In this case, *Shaddai* means that God is **all-sufficient** or **enough**. God is our *unlimited supply* of everything we need; he is **enough** and *we need nothing else*. He will keep his Word and fulfill his promises and we don't need to **look for** or **work out any other solution**. He is able to do *abundantly more than we could ask or imagine*. We only need to believe him and take him at his Word!

♥ Heart Preparation

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him (Psalm 37:7). Before you begin this lesson – and to prepare your heart to receive what God has for you – **sit quietly before God, in silence, for 5 minutes**. (It might be helpful to set a timer so you can focus on God and not the passing of time.) During this time, don't try to accomplish anything other than just being quiet with God. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to focus on God, saying something like, *Here I am, Lord or I belong to you, God*.

Try to do this exercise of silence one other time during the week. We are trying to cultivate a *quiet heart* before God so that we can *sense his Presence and hear his words spoken to our hearts* in spite of the *noise* and *distractions* of life.

Jesus' Encouraging Words to You . . .

I Am speaking in the depths of your being. Be still, so that you can hear My voice. I speak in the language of Love; My words fill you with Life and Peace, Joy and hope. I desire to talk with all of My children, but many are too busy to listen . . .

Jesus Calling (December 16) by Sarah Young

A Prayer to Help Prepare Your Heart

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,

with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it). Amen

Questions

Read **Genesis 17:1-22**. (You can read background information on Abram in *Lesson 3, Question 1*.)

Covenant – The idea of *covenant* is really not known in our culture, but in Old Testament times, the complex concept of *covenant* was the foundation of social order and community relationships – and God used this concept to demonstrate his commitment to keeping the promises he made to certain people in the Bible. A *biblical covenant* is a clear statement of God's purposes and intentions expressed in terms that bind God by solemn oath to perform what he has promised. Unlike a **contract**, a *covenant* that God makes does not expire; it is a **permanent agreement** that God is obligated to keep, even after the death of the person with whom the covenant was made.

- Genesis 17** is the narrative of God, again, appearing to Abram to confirm his *covenant* or promise to him that was first made about 25 years before this appearance. Fill in the chart below, listing the *main components* of the covenant that God made with Abram.

Verse	Components of the Covenant
17:4	
17:5	
17:6	
17:7	
17:8	
17:15-16	
17:19-21	

- ♥ What parts of this covenant (17:4-8) would be impossible for a human being to promise and then guarantee their happening? What does this reveal about God?
- Genesis 17:1** is the first time in the Bible that God revealed himself as *El Shaddai – God Almighty – the God who has the power to keep his promises* (see *Introduction*). Why do you think God chose *this time* in Abram’s life (and not before) to reveal himself as *El Shaddai* (17:17)?
 - ♥ Why did God wait until Abram was 100 years old and Sarah 90 years old (17:17) to fulfill his promise of giving them a son? What does this reveal about God and the promises he makes?
 - ♥ Can you think of a promise that God has specifically spoken to you either through his written Word or through the Holy Spirit to your heart? Did he keep his promise? Will he keep his promise?
 - ♥ What was Abraham's response to the *presence* and *voice* of God (17:3, 17)? What do you think caused this response? How do you usually sense God’s presence and voice? What is your usual response?
 - From what we have learned about the use of names in the Old Testament, what do you think was the significance of God changing Abram’s name to Abraham (17:5) and Sarai’s name to Sarah (17:15-16)? (Abraham means “*father of many nations*” and Sarah means “*princess*.”)

- ♥ Do you think it is important to remember and be reminded of God’s promises? Why or why not? How has God reminded you of his promises? What do you sometimes do to remember God’s promises?
- ♥ What did God require from Abraham as a sign that he believed and accepted God's “impossible” promise (17:9-11)? Can you think of some reasons why God would require this outward, permanent mark from Abraham and all his descendents? As New Testament followers of Christ, what are some practices required of us that may serve the same purpose as circumcision in the Old Testament?

God revealed himself to Abraham as *El Shaddai* – **God Almighty**, in the context of making Abraham a *promise*. A *promise* is a solemn pledge to perform or grant specified things. The **value of a promise** depends upon the reliability and trustworthiness of the person who makes the promise. A promise can be *conditional*, requiring a certain response from the one who receives the promise in order for the promise to be fulfilled; or *unconditional*, meaning no response is required in order to receive what is promised. The Bible is full of God's “very great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4), given to those who believe. The name *El Shaddai* reminds us that God can and will keep his promises.

4. Read the verses listed below and record what you learn about God keeping his promises.

Verse	God and His Promises
Numbers 23:19	
1 Samuel 15:29	
1 Kings 8:56	
Psalm 89:34	
Hebrews 10:23	

- ♥ Do you equally believe the promises that different people make to you? If not, what makes the difference? How does this apply to believing God’s promises?
 - ♥ Why does God make us promises in his Word? What do you think is his motivation? What do his promises reveal about us? About God?
 - ♥ When you are experiencing hard times, is it easy or difficult for you to believe God’s promises of help? Are you more apt to doubt God’s *ability* or his *willingness* to fulfill his promises? Why do you think that you sometimes don’t receive what God has promised?
5. Abraham’s faith in *El Shaddai* to keep his promises was not perfect (**Genesis 16**) or without struggle – but in the end he believed that God was who he said he was and would do what he said he would do. Read **Romans 4:18-22** and describe the steps in Abraham’s process of faith.

From these verses in Romans, write out the verse that contains the meaning of God’s name, *El Shaddai*.

- ♥ When God makes us a promise, we could place our trust in *our own abilities*, in *faith* itself, in *the promise* itself, or in *God himself*. Discuss with your small group the differences between these four options. How do we place our trust in *God alone* to fulfill his promises?
- ♥ When have you had to wait a long time before God acted in your circumstances? Why doesn’t God always act quickly? How does waiting affect you? What can we do while we wait?

- ♥ **Romans 4:21** says that Abraham was "*fully persuaded*" and "*absolutely convinced*" that God had the power to do what he promised. What arguments might have played out in Abraham's mind before he became *fully persuaded* and *absolutely convinced*? What arguments do you find playing out in your mind when you are struggling to trust God for something? What conclusion do you usually come to?

El Shaddai has the power to give us what he has promised and what we need. But, in order to believe and receive God's promises, we must first *know* what his promises are. This is why reading and studying God's Word is so important. Do you make time to read some of God's Word each day? Perhaps a Psalm or slowly reading through a particular book of the Bible? As you read, mark or underline any promises from God that you find so that they can be easily found when you need them. We cannot *receive* what we do not *know*, no matter how willing God is to give!

6. For each of the promises from God's Word listed below, state 1) *the promise* in your own words; 2) what, if any are the *conditions of the promise* (something you must do); and 3) in what *area of your life* is this promise most needed?

Philippians 4:6-7

1 Corinthians 10:13

Matthew 6:31-33

1 John 5:14-15

FYI - More promises from Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:8-9; Psalm 9:9-10; 27:5; 37:4; 46:1; 55:22; Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 40:28-31; 41:10; 43:1-2; Jeremiah 29:11-13; 33:3; Luke 11:9-10; John 1:12; 11:25-26; 14:23, 26-27; 15:7; 16:23; Romans 8:26-28; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 4:13, 19; James 1:5; 5:14-16; 1 John 1:8-9; 2:27; 5:11-12

- ♥ How would you explain *faith* to someone? Why do you think God requires the response of faith to receive what he has promised? How does our faith grow and become stronger?

♥ Heart Therapy

SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH *EL SHADDAI - GOD ALMIGHTY . . .*

Choose a promise from Scripture, either one listed above or another one of your choosing. Take some time to internalize the promise; ponder it, memorize it, journal it, expressing your need and helplessness.

How will you respond to this promise in faith? You may want to use the following steps:

Proclaim - State the promise in the first person, as if you were speaking to God (You, I, me, etc.).

Pray - express your need to God and ask him to give what he has promised.

Praise - Praise and thank God for his *provision*, his *generosity*, and his *willingness* and *ability* to give.

Place your trust in *El Shaddai - God Almighty*. Live as if his promise is true. Continue to believe and obey.