

1 El Shaddai:

2 Scripture

- When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said,
 - "I am God Almighty {El Shaddai};
 - walk before me and be blameless.
 - I will {now} confirm ...
 - my covenant between you and me and
 - will greatly increase your numbers." (Gen. 17:1–2)

3 Scripture

- Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,
 - "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 from you." (Gen. 17:3–6)

4 Scripture

- I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you 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 are now an alien,
 - I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you, and

- I will be their God." (Gen. 17:7-8)

5 Scripture

- God also said to Abraham,
 - "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 that she will be the mother of nations;
 - kings of peoples will come from her." (Gen. 17:15–16 NIV)

6

7 Introduction

- One married couple realized when they celebrated their 10th anniversary that their marriage had lasted longer than almost everything involved with the actual wedding.
 - The bridal store had gone out of business.
 - The bakery went bankrupt.
 - The florist and the church janitor had both died.
 - Leslie McCowan no longer worked at the Marriott Griffen Gate Hotel.
 - And the pastor who performed the ceremony had left the ministry.

8 Introduction

- Some promises don't last long as well.

- These days, even legal contracts (which are just formal promises) can be broken
 - if you have enough money to pay for a lawyer.

9 Introduction

- And how about guarantees?
 - We know a guy who had his house re-roofed by a reputable roofer.
 - The job included a 10-year guarantee.
 - About two years after the roof was installed, a leak developed.
 - When the homeowner tried to contact the roofer to have it fixed, he discovered that the man had retired and moved to Florida.
 - The guarantee was worthless.

10 Promises Are Important

- However, it's crucial to understand that promises are significant in our relationships and business dealings.
- By their very nature,
 - promises are not just words;
 - they are commitments that bind us to certain behaviors in the future.
- This creates trust;
 - doing business or forming a relationship with another party is almost impossible without trust.

11 Promises Are Important

- It's not enough to make promises;

- we must also be prepared to fulfill them.
- This means considering the resources needed to keep our end of the bargain.
- It's important to remember that the day may come when failing to keep our word could have significant repercussions.
- This awareness should guide our actions and decisions.

12 Keeping Promises

- Unfortunately, as a society . . .
 - we build escape clauses into our contracts,
 - look for loopholes in our agreements,
 - insert weasel words into our guarantees, or
 - hold out for renegotiation.

13 Promises Are Important

- Some think getting stuck in an old promise is only for those who need more sidestepping skills.
- Thus, we have . . .
 - manufacturers who refuse to honor their product warranties,
 - politicians who renege on their campaign promises,
 - corporations that shuck their pension obligations and
 - ordinary people who make exceptions to their promises to one another.
- We live in a world where many promises aren't taken seriously.

14 Psalm 15

- It is no wonder that keeping a promise is highly valued in heaven.
- As Psalm 15 says, ...
 - Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?
 - He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous . . .
 - who keeps his oath (promises) even when it hurts . . .

15

16 Promise to Abram

- In Genesis 17, our text tonight is about God making a profound and enduring promise to Abram, a promise that carries the weight of divine commitment.
- It's not the first time God has done so with Abram; he had earlier issued His promise with that patriarch, recorded in Genesis 12.
 - There, God promised the then 75-year-old Abram that he would be the father of a great nation.
 - And through him, all people would be blessed.

17 Promise to Abram

- That implied that Abram would have at least one child through whom descendants would come.
- God even promised to give land to Abram's "offspring" (12:7).
- But since then, Abram's wife, Sarai, who was well past childbearing years in any case, had produced no children.

18 Promise to Abram

- In Genesis 15, Abram, now older and still childless, assumes -- as is the custom when a man dies childless -- that one of his slaves will be his heir.
- But God tells him,
 - "Coming from your own body will be your heir" (Gen. 15:4 NIV).
- Yet, despite this promise, the couple remains childless, their hearts heavy with the weight of unfulfilled expectations.

19 Promise to Abram

- Eventually, at Sarai's suggestion, Abram fathers a son, Ishmael, by his wife's maid, Hagar.
- Abram assumes that it's through Ishmael that God's promise of descendants will be fulfilled.
- This is the context as chapter 17 opens.
- Abram is now 99 and Sarai is 89. Ishmael is 13.

20 Promise to Abram

- God will bless Ishmael with descendants in his own right (17: 20), but God now tells Abram that he will have another son, born to Sarai, who shall be called Isaac.
- God changes Abram's name to Abraham as a sign of this promise.
- Abram means "exalted father," but Abraham means "father of a multitude."
- God also changes Sarai's name to Sarah.

21

22 God's New Name

- Most Bible versions render El Shaddai as "God Almighty."

- The Bible first identifies God by the name Elohim, and it appears in the very first verse of the Bible:
 - “In the beginning, God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.”
- That name appears more than 2,500 times in the Old Testament, translated into English simply as “God.”

23 God’s New Name

- But here in Genesis 17, God is introduced as El Shaddai.
- This name for God appears far fewer times, and when it does, it’s usually at moments of significant need for the people involved.
- For example, in this case, Abram is told that he and Sarai are to have a son.

24 Promise-Maker (Summary)

- The El part of El Shaddai is the shortened form of Elohim, meaning “God,” but the precise meaning of Shaddai is a little uncertain.
- Nevertheless, most Bible scholars translate it as “Almighty” as the root word “shadad” means to be strong.
- When God chooses to identify Himself as 'El Shaddai', He is making a profound statement about His nature.
- He declares Himself to be the God of strength, a title that carries immense weight in our theological understanding.
- Thus, since He is strong, He can fulfill what He promises.

25 Promise-Maker (Summary)

- When God comes to Abram as El Shaddai, God comes for a specific purpose—to remind Abram that God has the ability to keep His promises.
- God comes with comfort, but it’s comfort with substance —a covenant.

- Abram and Sarai, now renamed Abraham and Sarah (as reminders of God as a promise-keeper), will be the progenitors of a great nation through a son who is yet to be born to them.
- God takes on a new name at the same time God renames Abram and Sarai, which signals a new beginning together based on promise.

26 Promise-Maker

- This reality of a kept promise is vital to understanding anything about God.
- Kept promises are part of what defines God's character.
- As the Scripture says,
 - God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.
 - Does he speak and then not act?
 - Does he promise and not fulfill? (Num 23:19 NIV)

27 Promise-Maker

- When Joshua was old and ready to die, he made this statement about the faithfulness of God:
 - "Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." (Josh 23:14 NIV)
- Solomon says the following as well:
 - "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David." (1 Kings 8:15 NIV)

28 Promise-Maker

- Samuel says of the Lord,

- “He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” (1 Sam. 15:29 NIV)
- And in the book of Psalms, it says.
 - Your arm is endued with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted. (Psa. 89:13 NIV)
 - Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. (Psa. 89:14 NIV)

29 Promise-Maker

- And Jesus says,
 - “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Luke 21:33 NIV)
 - “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20 NIV)

30

31 The Faithful God

- In Genesis 17, Abram responds to the news that he and Sarai will have a son by falling on his face and “laughing” (v. 17).
- As we dive into Genesis 17, a question arises:
 - What was the nature of Abram’s laughter?
 - Was it the laughter of delight or
 - the laughter at the seemingly ridiculous notion that such would happen to two very old people?
- After all, common sense says that there’s no way babies are born in a nursing home.
- Later, Sarah laughed, too. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?” (Gen. 18:12 NIV)

32 The Faithful God

- Let's remember that the promised son was indeed born to Abraham and Sarah, and, at God's instruction, they named him Isaac (v. 19), which means "to laugh."
- So, let us remember that God loves to do things beyond what we can think, hope, or imagine.
- He wants to show us that since He is El Shaddai (God Almighty), there's nothing too hard for him.

33 The Faithful God

- God keeps His promises because ...
 - He is good and has
 - the power to fulfill them.
- As the Scripture says, ...
 - Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. (Psa 34:5 NIV)
- So then, let us ...
 - not look to our circumstances and pout, but
 - to the God who can make us laugh out loud.

34 The Faithful God

- For He can ...
 - fix our finances,
 - heal our diseases,
 - restore broken relationships, and

- encourage our souls with hope.
- For our God is El Shaddai—God Almighty!
- Therefore, let us delight ourselves in God Almighty and walk blameless before Him, for great is His faithfulness.
AMEN