



## Bountiful Abundance

### Bible Study

[Please provide: Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

The overarching theme of the 2015 LWML Convention in Des Moines, Iowa, was “Bountiful” and the theme verse was 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV): *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.* The goal for every aspect of the convention was: “Through Christ’s bountiful love and blessings of Word and Sacraments, I am equipped by the Holy Spirit to work in my Father’s harvest field.”

Those who were blessed to be in Des Moines, those who were blessed to catch parts of the convention by live streaming, those who were blessed to hear the reports of their delegates as they shared their experiences via zone or society meetings, all know that the concepts of “Bountiful: Sow, Nourish, Reap” were covered very thoroughly as we were indeed fed by God’s Word and Sacrament and nurtured through worship and fellowship.

So, what might be a new approach or angle to the concept Bounty, Bountifully, Bountifulness? What is that angle, you ask? How about *El Shaddai*? Hum.

**Opening Prayer:** Bountiful Father, we thank You for the opportunity to join with fellow members of the Body of Christ to spend this time in Your Word and in conversation with one another. Still our minds as we come from the rat-race of our world so that we can focus on what You would have us learn and so that we can better understand the bountiful abundance that You provide for us as Your dear children through the bountifully abundant blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, shed for us on the cross of Calvary. It is in the name of our resurrected King that we pray and begin this time together. Amen!

Have you heard the song “El Shaddai”? I imagine most of you have, but, if you have not, one place to hear it would be at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKHa6Cm62uI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKHa6Cm62uI).

So, what does God’s name, *El Shaddai*, mean? It is a Hebrew compound word that literally means “The All-Sufficient One” and is usually translated in our English Bibles as “Almighty God,” “the Almighty,” or “God Almighty.” If we translate the Hebrew words we have a very beautiful, and possibly never thought of, picture and name of our bountiful God.

I suggest to you that the name of God we are considering here can be broken into three parts.

The first part of this name of our Heavenly Father is the Hebrew word “*El*” which comes from a root word meaning “might, strength, and/or power.” In Holy Scripture the word “*El*” is almost always used with other Hebrew words to better explain just who the true God is, sharing with the reader and the hearer more insight into just who our God, the True God, the Only God, is.

Share with the group what it means to you and how it impacts your life as a redeemed (bought back through the perfect life, death, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) child of God, that

He is “*El*.”

The second part of His name can also be broken into two parts – “*Shad*” and “*Dai*.” These two words share with us a beautiful description of our Father.

“*Shad*” is a Hebrew word that means “breast,” indicating to us sufficiency and nourishment. Now before you begin to wonder about this pastor, remember that I live and love life lived in rural America, having served 18 years in very-rural Nebraska and 12 years now in very-rural, central Texas. One of the most beautiful things about life in the rural community is the beauty of God’s creation, especially in the spring of the year, as the baby lambs and calves and colts take great delight in nursing and receiving the bountiful abundance of their mother as God blesses her with the ability to provide for their every need. It must also be said before we go any further that the picture the word “*Shad*” paints for us is far different from what you will see on billboards, in magazines, on television, on the big screen, and on the ever-present electronic devices.

With that said, what does Holy Scripture have to say to us about breasts? In regard to this Hebrew word “*Shad*” and the name *El Shaddai*, we read this in Isaiah 66:10-14:

<sup>10</sup> “**Rejoice** with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; <sup>11</sup> that you may nurse and be **satisfied** from her **consoling** breast; that you may **drink deeply** with delight from her **glorious abundance**.” <sup>12</sup> For thus says the Lord: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be **carried upon her hip**, and **bounced upon her knees**. <sup>13</sup> As one whom his mother **comforts**, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> You shall see, and your heart shall **rejoice**; your bones shall **flourish** like the grass; and the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.” [emphases added]

What is the promise *El Shaddai* shares with us in His very own words through the prophet Isaiah?

Again we see proof of *El Shaddai*’s abundance in Isaiah 49:14-16.

<sup>14</sup> But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” <sup>15</sup> “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet **I will not forget** you. <sup>16</sup> Behold, **I have engraved you** on the palms of my hands; your walls are **continually before me**.” [emphases added]

Do you ever feel like the people of Zion? Does it ever seem as if God has forgotten you? Share a time when you have felt this way.

What is God’s promise to us in these words of Isaiah? What is the glorious promise God makes to you?

What are the two pictures He uses to make His promise of continual care and bountiful abundance crystal clear for you?

The second part of the word *Shaddai*, “*Dai*” in the Hebrew, means “sheds forth,” “pours out,” or “to heap benefits.”

**Read** Genesis 42:24-25. Here we get a very clear picture of what this word means as Joseph sent his brothers from Egypt, back to their home and their father with incredible **provision**, **sustenance**, and **blessing**.

Joseph’s brothers came seeking food so they “*may live and not die*” (Genesis 42:2), but received so much more. What a joy that, when sharing with others the wonder and bountiful abundance of our Father in heaven, we can share with them that He is *El Shaddai*, the One who is mighty to nourish, satisfy, and supply.

Let us recap for a second:

*El* - might, strength, and/or power

*Shad* - breast, indicating sufficiency and nourishment

*Dai* - sheds forth, pours out, to heap benefits

So, when we put the two words together we get the All-Sufficient, All-Bountiful, All-Powerful, All-Mighty *El*.

What part of this name of our Heavenly Father has the most meaning for you? Why did you answer as you did?

No matter which part of His name brings us the most comfort, one thing is certain, we have a Father who mightily and abundantly nourishes, satisfies, protects, and supplies His people. As His called and redeemed children through the water of the Word of Holy Baptism, continually strengthened and nourished through the Word and Sacrament of Holy Communion, we are indeed abundantly blessed in every way with every kind of blessing from His most bountiful hand.

What more can we say? We need to add that even as we rejoice in our Mighty God who deals with us His dear children in regard to nourishment, in regard to strength, in regard to power, in regard to sufficiency, we must also realize our insufficiency and inability to provide bountifully for ourselves. It is important that we take a moment to think of this, for as long as we are content to rely on our own power and ability, there will never be a need for God.

To learn how this truth was evident in the life of a man named St. Paul, read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul experienced this in his life as he was blessed to get a glimpse of heaven. To keep him from becoming conceited, with what did God “bless” him?

Realizing his insufficiency, to whom did St. Paul turn?

And what was God’s answer to those prayers?

Was the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan, removed from his life?

(A contemporary Christian song that talks very well about this type of blessing is entitled “Blessings” and is written by Laura Story. Check it out on YouTube sometime. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOOFAaUGfRE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOOFAaUGfRE) )

But God blessed St. Paul with the assurance that His all-sufficient power was made perfect in his weakness. What was Paul’s response to this blessing?

He is content to live with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Why? Because he realized that when he is \_\_\_\_\_, then he is strong through faith in his *El Shaddai*.

Was Paul crazy to think this way? The world would say without a doubt he was. Sadly all too often we echo that same response, wanting instead to rely on our own sufficiency, our own power, our own ability.

That is when God allows us to experience the same blessing of seeing our insufficiency and just how meager what we call our abundance really is. That is why it is important that we first see just how insufficient we are so that we can be emptied and our all-sufficient and bountiful *El Shaddai* can fill us to overflowing as we experience His fullness and overabundance.

In fact, according to Isaiah 64:6, to what is everything we have to offer to God, including even our most righteous acts, compared? Isaiah reminds us here, *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* God’s Law makes it very clear to us that no matter how sufficient we think we are, no matter what we think we can offer to God, all of our good words, in fact everything we have to offer to God, are nothing more than filthy rags.

And so our Father allows trials and tribulations to be a part of our lives so that we can learn over and over again, as did St. Paul, that when we are weak then we are \_\_\_\_\_. As we learn this lesson over and over again (namely that there is nothing we can do for ourselves to bring ourselves close to God) we are blessed through faith to know *El Shaddai* as those who are made strong, and even more than that, made mighty in God in regard to nourishment, in regard to strength, in regard to power, and in regard to sufficiency, since He is the Almighty One who is able to nourish, to strengthen, and to empower us.

The Apostle Paul said that same thing in the New Testament, you will remember, in his letter to the Corinthians when he was thinking about all of the tremendous needs in the hearts of men and the tremendous responsibility that was his because he was entrusted with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He asked the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” If he had stopped right there, he could have turned away discouraged. We all could have turned away discouraged and said, “Well, we are just not sufficient.” But he added another word and said, “Our sufficiency is with God. We are not sufficient, *but our sufficiency is from God* (2 Corinthians 3:5).”

**Read** 2 Corinthians 3:4-6. What is this new covenant? The idea of a **new covenant** was prophesied in the Old Testament. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

This new covenant was brought into being and put into practice. Read Luke 22:19-20.

The Greek word for **covenant** (*diatheke*) had the ordinary meaning of "last will and testament." Paul's use of the word reinforces the sovereignty, the dominion, the power, the *El* of God, because it is not a covenant negotiated between Him and us, but a divine decree.

The word **covenant** also describes an "agreement" made by one party with full, complete, absolute power, which the other party may accept or reject, but cannot alter. The covenant God offers to us through faith in Christ Jesus is the agreement that He wants to make with us. We can either accept it through the power and working of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, or we can reject it, but we cannot change it to better fit our sinful tastes.

This **new covenant** presents the terms by which we can have a relationship with God, centered around Jesus and His work for us. What is this new covenant?

What does it mean that we are "*ministers*" of this new covenant?

Who is sufficient? In ourselves none of us, but in Christ Jesus, each and every one of us.

With this Good News ringing in our ears and resonating in our heart and mind, our prayer for each other is Paul's prayer for each of us in Ephesians 3:14-21.

We join our voices together in this prayer: *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Scripture references are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

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