

Good Morning Fellowship! My name is Christopher Young. I'm on the student ministries team here. I do realize that many of you don't know me, so let me take a few moments and introduce myself. If you haven't been here in the past few weeks, we've been in a series called awkward family photos where we've been talking about how God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect plan; how through awkward families he achieves an awesome future for those who trust in Him. Today I want to show you a few of my family photos.

Let's look at the first one. This photo is an exciting one. High school graduation at the historic Holy Name Cathedral in downtown Chicago. I'm thrilled to have completed this next step of education and having my family there to support me. As you can see, I'm sandwiched between two of my living grandparents. To the right of the photo, between my grandmother and aunt is my mother, Renee. On the far-left side is my other aunt. What a great moment of accomplishment.

Here's the second one. Aww this is a fun picture. My wife, Deana and I had just gotten married, our family and guests have all eaten and drank and we are simply dancing the night away. I'm to the right. My wife's in the middle. My mother's in the back in blue. Two of my sisters are in this photo. And this was another great time!

One more photo – Of all the photos, this took the most effort to produce. It's Christmas season 2014. We were trying to get the kid to smile. In fact, behind all those adult smiles were our voices "trying to get them to look at the camera (hold a smile a demonstrate on stage)." You see we had just herded them from the toys to this couch with my mother and we were trying to settle them down because they were arguing over the toys. We simply wanted them to smile for the camera. And as you can see, we were very successful. No. My niece McCaylah looks puzzled, Trey looks disappointed, our daughter London in my mother's lap has no clue what's going on, and Kennedy looks like she's plotting revenge after this photo. But nonetheless this is our best family photo.

And what you may not know about this photo is... it's actually pretty awkward. In fact, all three pictures are awkward. Can you see it in this photo? (next photo - wedding) "what about now, can you see it?" ... (next photo - family) "There it is again, see it now?"

No, You don't see what I see. You may be thinking, "these a perfectly normal family photos." But they're not. You see what's so awkward about them is... my dad's missing. And unfortunately, he would never be in another photo with me again.

26 years ago, my mother sat me down on a white couch in my grandmother's living room, sometime in the morning as the sun began to peek through the window, and I remember she looked into her son's curious eyes and she told me that my dad was killed in a violent exchange with thieves who stole his car. And ever since then all of our family photos have been pretty awkward.

And you know they never found the guys that did it. And as I think back because I was so young, this reality has been awfully disappointing for me and my family because life could have been a lot different. My siblings and I would have been better advantaged growing up. Life wouldn't have been so hard. He was a family man, who loved deeply. I remember how he would have friends help him transport carloads of toys during Christmas time just to bring us joy. It was a huge lost for all of us.

You know many of you may have had a more difficult past than I've had, but I just want you to know today, we're going to look at a passage that reminds us that Life's disappointments are no match for

God's appointed. That when life takes us in a direction we never planned to go, God's gone on ahead of us and has prepared someone for us. I want you to know that...

And we see this in the story of Cain and Abel, children of Adam and Eve.

I want to read the story to you first, and then I want to talk about it. Now we won't have time to talk about the entire story today, I'll encourage you to do that when you get a chance. It begins with this beautiful family photo in Chapter 4:1-2 of Genesis. Which by the way comes on the tail end of Chapter 3 where the parents adam and eve disobey God in the garden and decide to eat the fruit God forbid them to eat. As most of you remember, God casts judgement/punishment on the serpent who he told is cursed among all animals, the woman is told she would have children but it childbearing pains would be very painful, and adam was told that he would still be able to eat but his labor with ground would be very difficult. And all people would be born to die. As God finished pronouncing judgement on their disobedience. And it brings us to Chapter 4:1 where it says...

Adam (knew) made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man."² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

In the first two verses we see this perfectly normal family portrait of two parents with their two sons. One taking care of the meat while the other takes care of the fruits and veggies.

Verse 3 reads:

³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Now, why God accepted Abel's offering and not Cain's? That remains disputed today as scholars continue to debate whether it was because of the nature of the sacrifice or the integrity of the giver. So, we're not entirely sure, but let's see what happens next.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?" ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

In other words, God is urging Cain, "if you do what is right, will not your countenance (facial expression) be uplifted? Of course it would because you would have received a reward. So, do the right thing. And let's see Cain's response.)

⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."^[a] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Cain decides not to heed God's warning, and instead we see the first homicide in human history. Cain premeditates his brother's murder as he lures him away into the fields and assassinates him. What a dramatic change of events.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain here appears to be provoking a negative response from God with this sarcastic-rhetorical question

¹⁰ The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

In other words, Cain's punishment not only put him out of a job (as the ground no longer produced for him) which made him a restless nomad, it also took his protection away (if you had no boundaries you became vulnerable to anyone's attack).

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵ But the LORD said to him, "Not so^[e]; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. (we see in Cain's mess God has mercy) ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod,^[f] east of Eden. (this may be the saddest part of the story as Cain leaves God's presence.)

I want to make three observations about this story. The first one is...

All families are perfect until you get to know them.

TEXT: That was certainly the case here. In the first few verses of chapter 4 we see two parents of two working sons. I imagine Adam and Eve were proud parents. They probably had plans for their children as they grew. Cain, being the oldest was entitled as chief heir to the inheritance of the family. The family will legally set him up to receiving almost everything. And Everything seemed perfectly normal...

But we quickly learn that this family is far from perfect. The reality is, all of our families from the outside looking in seem perfect, especially on a Sunday morning.

You may look at me, my wife and daughter London and think awe she's so cute... Deana's so adorable as she wobbles through the church, and Chris is this young energetic dad, which may be true by the way. But if you happen catch a car ride home with us on a day we are both very hungry (and this doesn't happen often but occasionally it may) you might hear a conversation like this. Hey Sweetie, you hungry?

All families are perfect until you get to know them.

The second observation we see is All people seem normal until they experience disappointment.

TEXT: Again, it seems to be the case here. Cain has a younger brother and two parents, everything's going well. Until God favors his brother's offering and does not favor his. Cain is definitely disappointed. And we know this because the text says he's angry, his face is downcast. He didn't heed God's direction. Instead he kills his brother. And then when God confronts him on it, he gets sarcastic with God. "Am I my brother's keeper?" So, Cain seemed normal until he experienced disappointment.

Maybe you're here this morning, you're sitting listening to me; no one knows it but you've disappointed by a

- Spouse / close friend betrayed your trust - You find it difficult to trust
- Lost a parent / parent figure – angry, destructive,
- Bullied in school - Hate the way your body looks / insecure / hate yourself
- Politics – cynical, untrusting human sincerity or integrity
- Abused sexually, physically and emotionally – ashamed / unforgiving
- Marriage isn't going well / Experienced a divorce – bitter

All of us seem normal until we experience disappointment

- Recently got a doctor's report that was negative – angry, unsympathetic
- Career hasn't taken off - jealousy/envy in your heart, It's hard for you to celebrate anyone else's success
- You've discovered new limits in your life where you can't do what you used to do - frustrated
- Someone left you – lonely, unwanted
- Children aren't where you want them today - upset

One thing we know is **all people seem normal until they experience disappointment**. And man, it can cause us to do some crazy things and feel... but I want you to know...

When life disappoints, God appoints.

In a story where a family's lives were upended as a result of a child's negative response to disappointment, God's faithfulness steps into the story, and appoints hope.

After Cain had been cast into perpetual exile. He had children and his descendants built cities, music, monuments and continued killing we are brought to verse 25 which says...

²⁵ Adam ^[a] had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him ^[a] Seth, for, *she said*, "God ^[a] has appointed me another ^[d] offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him." ²⁶ To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call ^[s] upon the name of the LORD. (NASB)

At the beginning of this message, I revealed to you one of the greatest disappointments in my life, losing my dad at the age of 7 and it has changed my life. But I want to tell you that in the midst of my loss and disappointment, God stepped in and appointed men that helped make today possible. And I want to introduce you to three of them.

Eugene Williams – business, entrepreneurship, responsibility, consistency, investing

Uncle Michael Collins (eunice, ashley, mike) – (esteem, admire, and love) Godly father – who took children and wife to Sunday school, church service, prayed, loved, worked hard for them, with wife Eunice set household expectations to read, clean, love, respect. cleanliness, A&T Camp, prayed with his family, responsible father and husband

Samuel Ford – taught how to talk to girls, confidence in high School, I can be myself and be comfortable with that, business, persistence and consistency as he was a very successful businessman.

You see I watched and studied these men, who may not have known their impact on my life. But when a young man grows up on the south side of the violent streets of Chicago without a father, the odds are greatly stacked against you.

But let me tell you, as a result of God's faithful appointments, to this day I call on the name of the Lord. As a result of a God who became the father to the fatherless, I call on the name of the Lord.

And church, He appointed hope for the Adam's family, he appointed hope for me and my family, and he appoints hope you and yours. Thanks to God's appointment of Seth, through his descendants we get Noah – Abraham – David – Jesus. And it's in Jesus that if we trust his death and resurrection accomplished the forgiveness of our sins. In the words of Peter in Acts 2:21

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

So I got a question for you, where have you experienced disappointment in life? And secondly, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to respond like Cain who turned from God and committed a horrible act? Or will you respond like Seth, who turned to God and began to call upon the name of the Lord?

Church I encourage you, offer your disappointments to the Lord and say, Lord here it is, I trust you to appoint hope. And I believe that my life's disappointments are no match for your appointed.

Let's pray.