

# TWO OF A KIND

BY JANESEA CLOWARD

*These twin brothers try to find good ways to be more alike.*

***Although physical circumstances have sent their future lives in different directions, being brothers is the most important thing to Nathan (left) and Brad.***

**T**hey have the same blue eyes and the same sandy brown hair, but Nathan and Brad Jackson, 18, are one set of identical twins anyone can tell apart at a glance. That's because Brad, the younger twin, has cerebral palsy and has to use a wheelchair.

People still mix them up, though. Just last year, one of Nathan's friends from the basketball team saw Brad from a distance and thought Nathan had gotten into an accident. He called later to make sure Nathan was OK. Nathan just laughed and said, "I'm fine, but now you've met my twin brother."

Nathan and Brad, who are from the River Ridge First Ward, South Jordan Utah River Ridge Stake, share more than identical genes. They both love being active, getting to know new people, and spending time with their family. They also share a deep love for the Savior, which is heightened by the unique experience they share as brothers.

## **Being Together**

Nathan has always had a special awareness of his brother's needs. When they were babies, Brad lacked the coordination to drink from his own bottle, so Nathan fed Brad from his bottle. Nathan would take a few sips, then help Brad take a few sips, and so on, so they both could drink.

A few years later, they both caught such severe cases of strep throat they couldn't talk because of the pain. Nathan wanted a drink, so he took his mom's hand and led her into the kitchen. Then he heard Brad crying in the other room. He led his mom back to the room to get Brad so they both could get a drink.

"I think he just kind of understood somehow," his mom, Cheryl, says. "He was always looking out for his brother."

And Nathan still looks out for Brad, whether it's for physical things or just making sure Brad feels included. In spite of the wheelchair, Brad wants to do everything his brother does. For example, when Nathan



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## APPRECIATING THE LITTLE THINGS

Every day when the garage door creaks open, Brad claps his hands and squeals in delight because that means his dad is home from work. His enthusiasm for the little things in life helps his family, and especially his twin brother, appreciate how much they have.

“He makes small things bigger than they really are, and it’s fun that way,” Nathan says. “It makes you realize what small things really are to the family, how fortunate we really are. Some things that are pretty trivial to other people are pretty important to him.”

played basketball, Brad got to be with the team and even got a jersey.

The twins also love camping and four-wheeling together. They especially enjoy the “guys only” trips they take each year with their dad, uncles, and cousins.

Brad wants to be just like Nathan when it comes to serving in the Church, too. When they received the Aaronic Priesthood, Nathan started passing the sacrament. Brad also wanted to pass the sacrament, but the routes around the chapel didn’t allow enough room to maneuver his wheelchair.

Nathan worked with the bishop to change the routes. The new version assigned all of the front pews to Brad, which left plenty of room for his wheelchair. Then he and Brad started passing the sacrament together.

When the boys were ordained as priests and Nathan started to bless the sacrament, Brad wanted to do that, too. With special permission from the bishop, his dad, Steve, helped Brad find a way to say the prayers intelligibly by using computer software.

### Being Apart

Now that they’re almost 19, Nathan is preparing for his mission by studying the scriptures and *Preach My Gospel*. He’s also saving every penny he earns working at a jewelry store and with his grandpa’s carpentry busi-

ness. But he says the hardest part of his mission is something he’s not sure how to prepare for—being without his brother for two years.

“I don’t think we’ve ever been apart for two weeks, let alone two years,” Nathan says. They even shared a room until they were 14, and the only reason Nathan moved out was so their mom could have more space to take care of Brad.

One night, not long after moving into his own room, Nathan told his mom, “I need to sleep in Brad’s room tonight.” She didn’t think anything of it until Nathan’s shouts for help woke her up a few hours later. Brad was very ill with a stomach virus and could barely breathe. If Nathan hadn’t been in the room, she probably wouldn’t have known that Brad needed help. Brad could have suffocated.

“We’re glad Nathan listened to that little prompting and stayed with Brad that night,” his mom says.

But Nathan didn’t even see it as a prompting at first. “I just had this feeling I had to sleep in there, so I did it,” he says.

### Being Different

Nathan sometimes wonders if it’s fair that Brad ended up in a wheelchair and he didn’t. He used to feel a little guilty when he thought about all the things Brad would never be able to do. He now realizes that, fair or not, everything they both go through will be for their good, and the Lord will help them through it.

Nathan says, “That’s the way I have to cope with it. It could’ve been me just as easily, but I think God had His hand in it.”

He isn’t sure what his life’s plan is yet, but he knows it will involve helping others. He volunteers at the special needs seminary at Bingham High School and occasionally goes to special needs Mutual with Brad. He loves getting to know people. Of course, his favorite person to be with is Brad.

“It’s not always easy,” Nathan says. “But I am glad he’s my brother.” **NE**



### **EAGLE PROJECT**

Nathan wanted his Eagle Scout service project to include Brad, so he asked the principal of Brad's special needs high school what he could do. They ended up building bookshelves for the autism classroom. Brad helped by supervising the work and keeping a close eye on the power tools—his favorite things.