

BROTHERS

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For Matt and Mark Fletcher of Phoenix, Arizona, brothers is more than a description of how they fit into a family. It's an explanation of how they live their lives.



From sports, their sisters, and each other, Matt (with the basketball) and Mark (with the volleyball) have learned a lot about how to be good brothers.

What do you think of when you think of a brother? If you're from the Lakewood Ward of the Tempe Arizona West Stake, or if you attend Desert Vista High School in Phoenix and you're into sports, Matt and Mark Fletcher come to mind. Matt, 19, and Mark, 17, are well known among their family and friends because their example shows what it really means to be brothers.

"One of the big things about Matt is how well he has kept Church standards," Mark says. "You see some of the bad stuff other people do, but it doesn't influence Matt. If something's not right, he tells them, 'I'm not going to do this,' and he sticks with it. He *prefers* to do what is right. His example influences me. It's been a real advantage to have a good older brother."

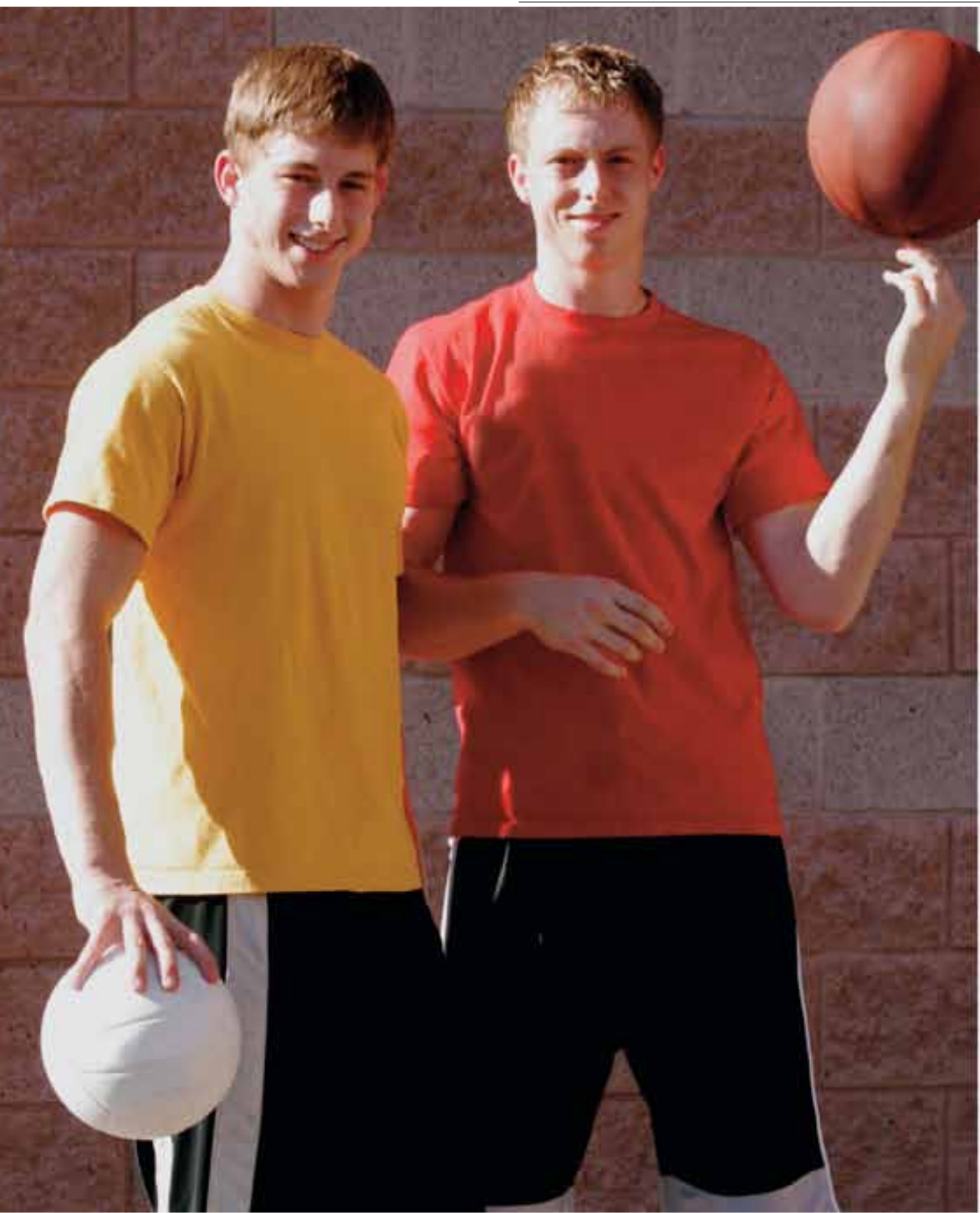
Matt is equally impressed with Mark. "He's a better brother than I am," he says. "We have a common interest in a lot of things, like missionary work and sports, and we love to motivate each other."

Motivation

Much of that motivating has been obvious over the years—going to Church activities and seminary together; hiking the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim and trekking to Havasupi Falls with Dad and other relatives; earning Duty to God awards and organizing Eagle Scout projects; working with a group in Mesa that builds homes for poor families in Mexico; planning group dates and staging impromptu basketball games that are legendary with their friends.

But there's another motivation for these two brothers that most people don't know about—each of them has overcome a learning disorder. "Matt struggles with comprehension and short-term memory, with applying what he's learned to solving problems," explains his mother, Christine. Mark, on the other hand, has







Their family (above) and their coach (below) have taught the Fletcher brothers that they can have a lot of influence for good simply by living the gospel and setting a good example. Both Matt and Mark have made extra efforts to watch out for members of their priesthood quorums and to reach out to those who have drifted away.

central auditory processing disorder, which means he “has to have things explained several times to understand, but then once he gets it, he’s got it.” For both young men, that means spending three or four times as much effort on homework as other students. However, they have each achieved nearly flawless grade point averages.

It also means the quick thinking required in sports can be particularly challenging. Fortunately, the Fletchers have been blessed with compassionate coaches. One of them, Ryan Tolman, coaches junior varsity basketball and varsity volleyball at Desert Vista High. He recalls when Matt was cut from the basketball team his sophomore year, partly because he couldn’t keep track of all the plays.

“Instead of giving up, he put together his own playbook, and then he would sit and draw diagrams, map out the X’s and O’s on little note cards, and go over the plays again and again,” Coach Tolman recalls. Matt also practiced night after night and morning after morning at a local gym. He never became a star, but through hard work he did make the team. He also convinced one of the star players to stop using foul language. As a senior he received the Joe Selleh Award, given to the team’s “outstanding contributor.”

Dedication

Mark’s sport was volleyball, and he was cut from the freshman team about the same time Matt was cut from the basketball team. Following his brother’s example, he decided not to quit but to work harder. “That’s another common ground we have as brothers; we’ve learned the value of work,” says Mark. And Mark had his work cut out for him. “I’m six feet, one inch, and as a middle blocker, I was up against a senior who is six feet, seven inches.” To compensate, he decided to become one of the best jumpers on the team. Like Matt, he trained incessantly. In fact, they worked out together.

Mark made the team. Then, during his junior year, “The coach told me I probably wasn’t going to get much varsity playing time, so he wanted me to play junior varsity as well. That way I’d get experience instead of just sitting on the bench. It helped a lot. By keeping my form right, I increased my vertical leap, and I got to work on it during actual competition.”

Mark also found another way to contribute. “I wanted to get the rest of the team to be more enthusiastic from the bench,” he says, “so I came up with lots of positive things to say and encouraged everybody to do the same thing.” Guess who won the Selleh award for the varsity volleyball team? The trophies sit side-by-side on a shelf in Matt and Mark’s bedroom.

Reactivation

But there’s more to these brothers than sports. Their father, Don, recalls that “when Matt was serving as teachers quorum president, he took

his calling seriously. He identified quorum members who didn’t attend regularly and



A BROTHER'S EXAMPLE

Imagine having the opportunity to share the gospel with people from 11 different countries at the same time!

That's what Mark Fletcher was able to do during the summer. He was selected as a youth ambassador for the city of Phoenix and given the opportunity to visit Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. Everywhere he went, with city officials, at camps, and in social gatherings, Mark was recognized as a Latter-day Saint and often answered questions about his standards.

Then similar youth ambassadors from 11 countries gathered in Phoenix, and Mark was able to talk about the Church with them as well. It was great to follow his brother's example of missionary work in Brazil by sharing his testimony with youth from all over the world.

prayed about what to do. He worked with adult leaders to organize an overnight campout he thought they would attend. One young man said he would be interested, and Matt followed up with him almost daily at school. In the end, three less-active boys came, enjoyed the association with the others, and heard the bishop make a presentation about Joseph Smith and bear testimony of the Savior.”

Later, when Mark was teachers quorum president, he had a similar experience. He found a young man who had not attended in some time, and went after opportunities to invite him to come back. The young man came out to an activity and felt welcome at church again.

Today, Matt, as an elder, and Mark, as a priest, continue to watch out for less-active quorum members—they send birthday greetings and make visits. Sometimes they just sit and talk. “It's like the Savior said,” Matt comments. “Leave the ninety and nine and find the one who has wandered away.” (See Matthew 18:12–13.)

Appreciation

Matt and Mark also know that brothers can do a lot to strengthen the family. They spend time helping their sisters, Sarah and Catherine, with their homework. They also play games—sometimes it's checkers or ping pong, but often it's a variation of dodge ball, with soft, puffy balls grandma made just for that purpose. They also enjoy home evening, reading scriptures together, family prayer, and listening to grandpa talk about his service

as a mission president. Matt expresses his admiration for his father: “He always talks about people in a positive way, especially Church leaders. He inspires me to want to be that way, too.” Mark remembers the many times he worked side-by-side with his mother as she ran a small business mowing lawns, weeding, trimming bushes, and picking up leaves. “She never took money from those in need,” he explains. “That taught me a lot about serving other people.”

Music has also been a large part of Matt and Mark's family participation. Both play the piano and encourage each other to learn new songs the same way they challenge each other athletically. Both have served as priesthood meeting pianists and have played in sacrament meetings and other settings. Mark particularly enjoys performing duets with Sarah, who plays piano and flute.

Anticipation

It's a hot day in Phoenix. Aren't most of them? But it's worth braving outdoor temperatures near 110 degrees to enter the cool chapel and hear Matt—now Elder Fletcher—speak in sacrament meeting prior to his departure for the Brazil Porto Alegre North Mission. He talks about his experiences as a deacon, teacher, and priest; about the ministering of angels; about an experience his father had that taught him that the Lord is watching over us; about the determination it took to succeed in a difficult class at BYU-Idaho that required him to learn to study in a new way; and how he will use that same determination, coupled with faith, to succeed as a missionary.

It is a memorable talk, and the family is still discussing it when a relative reminds Mark that because of their ages, the two brothers will go for three and a half years before they see each other again. Mark recalls what their stake president Karl Tilleman said. He told them that if they serve with integrity, their reunion after their missions will be similar to the joyful reunion experienced by Alma and the sons of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon. (See Alma 17:1–3.) After all, Matt went away to college, and when he came home, that reunion was sweet.

Besides, Mark and Matt know that they are not only brothers in their family, but brothers in the priesthood and in eternity. And that means they not only have each other but thousands, even millions, of brothers all over the world. **NE**