

This I Believe Statement

My belief is really a compilation of many: that everything happens for a reason, that sometimes the reason takes us a long time to figure out, and that people are placed into our lives for a purpose. But ultimately, these all boil down to my firm belief in miracles. In my mind, this belief is unique. I have only ever experienced one miracle, and yet my belief is as firm and unyielding as if I had experienced a miracle every day of my life.

What is the one miracle that shaped such a strong belief? I'll give you a hint. It is 5 feet tall, has shaggy blonde hair with cerulean blue eyes, and several *disabilities*: my younger brother, Jacob. I've talked about Jacob a lot on my blog, but that's because he is a large part of my life. I don't want to focus on all the sadness and hardship that followed Jacob on his journey to the world, so I will make it short and sweet: Jacob has a severe mental and developmental *disability* called Cornelia DeLange Syndrome. He cannot--nor will he ever--walk or talk. When he was born, we were told that he had two weeks to live. But I'll go ahead and spoil the ending for you now: Jacob lived. 15 years young and still going strong! After he made it through those first very shaky two weeks, we knew that Jacob was a miracle.

As I got older, I saw more clearly how different Jacob was and the special care that he needed. Why would he, out of all people, be chosen to spend his time on earth in such a weak and difficult state? I resented that fact that I couldn't talk to my little brother like all my friends or even go outside and kick a soccer ball with him. I started to wonder who or what would make Jacob the way that he was. For a long time, I think I was angry with God; for making Jacob's life so hard and for giving me the challenge of living with and caring for him. Writing this down now, I realize how naïve and selfish my anger was.

Now, I know that Jacob's life and its part in my own is a miracle, not a challenge. Jacob himself is a miracle in many ways. He proved medical professionals wrong by surviving a rough early start and growing into a strong little guy of 15 years. He is the happiest person I know despite also being the most sick and fragile. But his role in my life is the *true* miracle. I realize that without Jacob, I would be a completely different person. Jacob was put into my life so that he would have someone to love him unconditionally and to care for him, and he was put into mine to show me that God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers, and that miracles are very much real.