

People: the Proximate Cause
By Sarah Johns

As I walked into a stranger's backyard, I could hear the melody of foreign language being spoken with laughter and excitement. As soon as Abel saw me, he threw his hands in the air and welcomed me and my friends to the party. One by one, Abel introduced me to each person in attendance and told them that I was his classmate, treating me as an equal even though he is a seasoned attorney from India and I am just a 1L here in the US. The warmth of the event is hard to describe, but as I looked around the yard, I couldn't help but feel lucky to be allowed to take part in that moment with these Indian and Nepali saints.

I came to law school for one reason only: to help people. I submitted my application to BYU Law with a very limited understanding of what I was getting myself into, but I had heard the voice of the Lord dictating that direction and so I followed. In that backyard moment, I felt a quiet assurance of "this is why you're here." Nothing brings my heart more joy than to look into the eyes of another person and to be permitted to love and understand them.

I first met Abel during our Intro to Law week, and we connected again on our first day in property class. Over time, I learned of his story, his humility, and his willingness to follow the Lord. Having this quality in common added a sweet layer of love to our friendship. Meeting his family and friends only deepened that love.

My heart has traveled the world since starting law school. My dearest friends at BYU Law hail from Jordan, India, Brazil, Columbia, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Not only are these friends unified in the pursuit of the law, but we are also unified in the pursuit of our God. Some of us call Him Heavenly Father, some God, and still others Allah, but nonetheless, we are centered in our values and that has centered our friendships.

My short time at BYU Law has taught me that in the pursuit of a legal career, one can choose to be as dedicated to personal values and relationships as one desires to be. Sure, I care a great deal about the content of my classes but always more important will be the content of my heart. Getting proximate with the people around me has helped my heart to expand in only the best ways. My proximity to these amazing people has reminded me of the truth that I have been taught since I was just a child: that we are all part of a human family, and therefore we all have

commonalities, no matter how different we may seem on the surface.

Getting proximate, for me, is all about people. Getting proximate is learning to see and love people, taking the time to look into their eyes. BYU Law has supplied me with these sacred proximate opportunities every day since I began my 1L year. And these opportunities are preparing me so that if someday I find myself in a courtroom, prosecuting the accused, I might try a little harder to look into their eyes and exercise both justice and mercy. If someday I am in the middle of a heated legal dispute, I might better attempt to mediate and peace-make, remembering the value of each person around me. And if someday I'm overworked and tired, I might still take that pro bono case to help a member of my human family.

Getting proximate is all about getting to the point of it all, and from my experiences at BYU Law, I've found that the point is people.