

JOHN C. BRASSELL
Personal Statement (3 page)

The world needs benevolent leaders. An example of this leadership includes the words and actions of General Ulysses S. Grant during General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Grant observed Lee's dignity, dressed in his finest clothing, pressed, clean, and wearing a sword made of ivory and brilliant silver. While understanding and appreciating Lee's defeat and self-conscious position, Grant rewrote the surrender agreement to allow officers to retain their side arms, horses, and private property. Grant reasoned that to rebuild their lives, these men needed their horses to plant crops necessary to carry them through the winter. When the Union soldiers began to cheer, Grant stopped their celebration by declaring, "The rebels are our countrymen again. We can best show our joy by refusing to celebrate their downfall."

This August, a friend I hadn't talked to for a year called asking me to serve a lawsuit summons to the owner of his rental agency. The local sheriff's office had not been able to contact the owner after five attempts. I met with Civil Service officers for three area counties and learned this owner had a dozen other summons that had not been served because no one could contact her. For nearly two months, I made numerous unsuccessful attempts at different times and locations. My friend began to suggest some legal but dishonest approaches, that would make contact easier, but I didn't want to be deceitful. At the seventh attempt, I made honest contact.

She remained in the restaurant kitchen refusing to meet me. I just ordered food and sat. I waited over forty minutes, determined not to leave. The kitchen doors swung open, and a short, feisty woman charged towards me with her open hand, "OK, where is it?" As I stood and handed her the letter everything changed. In that moment I saw a mother and a grandmother, a woman working three jobs while driving an old truck. Her eyes were tired and sad, and I couldn't help holding onto her hand as I handed her the summons.

Still riled up, she turned and stormed into the kitchen, but soon returned to the table. She

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said, "I know you don't want to hear this, but this is hard!" She recounted the difficulties of being a rental agency owner. She eventually pulled up a chair to the table, asked to see pictures of my family, treated me to a free dessert, and gave me a hug as I left. With moist eyes, she bashfully thanked me for listening.

Like General Grant, I noticed the real person behind the angry face and snippy attitude. I saw the ivory grandmother with that pressed outfit she wore to three separate jobs. Unwilling to deviate from my commitment, yet sensitive enough to see the big picture, I was able to apply the principle, "Treat individuals like they are, and they will stay like they are; treat individuals like you wish them to be, and they will become who you wish them to be." Like General Lee, this scared owner was getting served either way, but like General Grant I looked beyond the moment, helped how I could, and remained persistent, patient, and focused on my duty and the individual.

Anyone can serve a summons and leave. Any general can sign a treaty and be done. But what makes me different is that I am sensitive to situations and people because of my experience with individuals, cultures, and vulnerable populations. I experienced different cultures as I moved across the country every four years and while living a year both in Venezuela and Chile. I have served as a caregiver and manager for an Alzheimer's resident facility. For the last four years I have mentored and coached for Special Olympics and have learned to communicate effectively and bridge both the social and cognitive gaps many of these individuals' experience.

As I communicate, I concentrate on individuals' needs and circumstances. When things go wrong or get hard, my attributes of persistence, integrity, judgment, and kindness don't get pushed behind; they come forward. These qualities make up my character. When approached with a difficult challenge, I research it thoroughly to avoid making a careless, emotional decision. I look for opportunities to serve whether it's a car broken down on the side of the road

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or a visit to a neighbor in jail. I work for what I have and have spent several semesters holding full-time jobs while taking up to 20 course credits to support my wife and children. I take initiative when I see someone being taken advantage of and am not too afraid of confrontation to step in and assist another.

As a missionary leader in Chile, I managed forty missionaries serving 500,000 individuals covering 300 square miles of Santiago. Primarily, I helped resolve multiple setbacks by engaging in frequent, successful conflict resolution. I helped motivate, encourage, and support missionaries who struggled with conflicting cultures, language barriers, and strenuous schedules. I organized training meetings, conducted interviews, and implemented transfers. I sought to unify missionaries from different countries and cultures by overcoming individual challenges and meeting common goals. One missionary's lack of social skills and compulsive behaviors kept him from leaving the apartment and meeting people. He would withdraw and refuse to communicate. I individualized our daily schedule to make room for opportunities, like spending hours each morning picking up litter or teaching English to locals, which got him outside communicating with people. He eventually felt comfortable, confident, and had a successful mission.

The world needs benevolent leaders. Law school, therefore, gives me the knowledge and skills necessary to become that leader by serving and enabling those who cannot help themselves. This is what I want to do with my life. I intend on proving myself academically while bringing to (XXXX) a well-rounded learner with passion, work ethic, determination, integrity, and heart. (XXXX) will give me the expertise and experience necessary to meet this life-long goal. After law school I will continue to represent your university, the profession, and my family through benevolent leadership.

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