

*A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees. -Amelia Earhart*

Years ago I attended the Stone Mountain Congregation just outside of Atlanta. It was a welcoming faith home during my college years and for a short time after Brian and I were married. Of the many mother figures that shaped my life while there, I want to tell you about Arva. She was from Alabama, was a good southern lady with a liquid, musical drawl and once acquainted with her you might lovingly be addressed from then on as “Sugaaaaa”.

Arva had a number of health issues that sometimes kept her from church, but when she was there, everyone targeted her. Visitors were quickly acquainted with her, children searched for her, and everyone at least touched base before leaving for lunch. What did she do that made her such a magnet? Candy. She carried a canvas bag FULL of candies. It sounds rather silly, juvenile even, to see grown men in suits asking for Arva and then combing through her bag as she engaged them with endearments and caught up on their families. But, she was nurturing relationship and grew the community through her approachable hospitality.

Now, some may not call this ministry, but I’ve adopted Arva’s “candy ministry” at work and it’s pretty interesting what it invites. You see, I’m a part-time digital file clerk for a local university. I mostly sit in the same place in front of a computer for several hours straight on the days I report. My workspace is in an upstairs, corner suite of an open courtyard setting. The three senior financial aid officers I support get very little foot traffic, even from the other staff and faculty on the campus. I wanted to be more than that lady upstairs, so I tapped my inner Arva and set out a candy basket to see what would happen.

I may not be a diabetic’s best support, and the Director calls me his diet saboteur, but people go out of their way for a sweet fix and we’re getting acquainted. Just before Christmas the Chancellor floated around the campus and after spotting the candy basket lingered a while and reminisced about a favorite candy of his childhood.

Not long ago workmen arrived and began flipping a classroom on the other side of the courtyard. Two dust covered young men poked their heads in my glass doors and the English speaker of the two proceeded to translate that his friend had come in when I wasn’t there and taken some candy. His plan was to replace it. We laughed, enjoyed a couple more candies and on my way out that day, I left two more mini-treats outside their work space. Last week, upon my return from the winter break, my bowl was brimming with new candies...and I didn’t buy them. These guys always greet me now and language is no longer a barrier as we smile, and wave.

It’s difficult to bring the message of Christ to the world if you aren’t engaged in relationship with people. Arva’s candy is small, and maybe not for you, but is there some other simple, sustainable way you could intentionally invite relationship? And, just what if...what if the people who enjoy my candy are being sent to me, because I need to be in *their* presence? Hebrews 13:2 *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

I’ll admit, candy is not feeding hungry children, curing threatening illnesses or solving world problems, but it is an open door to relationship and I can almost hear Arva’s voice, “Sugaaaaa, are you having a good day, today? Go ahead and take two, they’re little.”



-Sara