

Don't Miss Your Candy Necklace

By: Stephen Mattingly



I slowly strolled back toward the shops in the terminal. Abigail's candy necklace request was now at the forefront of my mind. It was as if God purposefully let the flight pull out one minute early, so I would miss it, so I would slow down, so I would experience what was most important. I had not yet fulfilled the simple request of bringing my daughter home a candy necklace. I had thought briefly about it once while in Pullman, but the activities and work pushed the request back to the recesses of my mind. It hadn't been a priority.

Through the week, other events had held my attention. Those other things seemed more important, but were they? I finally caught my breath as I told myself, "Okay. It will be okay. Calm down, control your emotions, relax and catch up on some reading."

Suddenly, about 50 yards away on the left, I saw it: The Candy Shoppe. I couldn't believe it. It shined bright like a beacon of salvation and solace for the tired traveler. What were the chances they would even have a candy necklace? If I found a candy necklace in this store, it would be a confirmation in my mind that God had a great sense of humor and was speaking to me in his own way, on his own timetable – not my timetable or the airline's.

I entered the candy shop with hopes that I would find the candy necklace. I tried to keep my excitement in check, because I did not want to be let down if the store didn't have it. I wanted to "see" it with my own eyes in order to believe, but blessed are those who believe already in their hearts and minds and need no visual confirmation, right? What we believe already in our minds dictates who we are. We become what we think; the mind sets the course for our lives.

I couldn't believe it. It only took two steps into the store to see the candy display case with the words "Original Candy Necklace" on it. The case was full of bright, beautiful candy necklaces. I reached for a clear plastic bag and filled it up with seven candy necklaces. The number seven is my favorite number and, interesting enough, is used throughout the Bible. I was elated to find this treasure in the Denver airport. It didn't really matter at this point that I wasn't leaving until the next morning. I had gotten the message loud and clear.

I paid for the candy necklaces and clutched the top of the bag with a power grip, as if to say, "I will not let go and miss my candy necklaces ever again in life." I visualized the joy on my daughter's face when I would give her the candy necklaces. It made me smile.

There is opportunity on the other side of difficulty. The rainbow waits to reveal itself, if only you endure the storm. Being delayed in the Denver airport was a gift. It gave me a great opportunity. What I had thought was a difficulty was really an opportunity. Most times, there are opportunities waiting for us when we are faced with difficulties. The difficulties are given to us as a way to strengthen us, refine us and make us better. They teach us something about ourselves and about life. I think of these teaching moments as candy necklaces.

Candy necklaces can come from setbacks or triumphs. They are always different things for different people. My first candy necklace was for Abigail, but it came to stand for slowing down, prioritizing my family and knowing that God is in control. Your candy necklace could be a kiss goodnight, a song, a picnic by your favorite lake after your car breaking down. It could be any moment or reward, stolen from a busy world, in which God's love is shared.

Many times, the sky looks the darkest right before a storm. It is this way in life. You can make your greatest breakthroughs during a storm. Don't quit or give up too soon, or you might just miss your candy necklace.