

January 28, 2008

I Don't Want to Be a Hydrox Cookie

Yesterday I read an article from the Wall Street Journal, that at first I thought was a joke, but it turned out to be true. The Hydrox cookie is dead. Not only is it dead, but it died five years ago, and people are only now realizing it.

The Hydrox cookie was created in 1908, by what would later become Sunshine Biscuits. They combined the words hydrogen and oxygen because they thought it communicated purity. (When you think of hydrogen and oxygen, do you think of purity?) Others thought it sounded more like a laundry detergent, but it gained a loyal following anyway. However, Nabisco had a much larger marketing budget for Oreos, so the Oreo always overshadowed the Hydrox cookie. In 1991, Sunshine created a new mascot, a glob of vanilla crème that morphed into a smiley figure named Drox. Pillsbury sued Sunshine, claiming that Drox looked too much like the Pillsbury doughboy. Pillsbury won and Drox was eliminated. In trying to appeal more to children, they renamed the Hydrox cookie as Droxies. When this didn't work, they quietly stopped making the cookie in 2003. The cookie was 95 years old when it died, and it has taken people five years to finally notice.

One person wrote on a website, "This is a dark time in cookie history. And for those of you who say, 'Get over it, it's only a cookie,' you have not lived until you have tasted a Hydrox." 866 people (in a nation of 300 million) have signed a petition demanding that the Hydrox cookie be brought back. Some don't believe the cookie has really gone away. In recent months, people have reported Elvis-like sightings – and tastings – of the defunct product.

The contest between Oreos and Hydrox used to be like Coke versus Pepsi, the Beatles versus the Rolling Stones, and dog people versus cat people. But the Hydrox had so faded from public view that it is only now, five years after its death, that people are beginning to notice. This all according to the Wall Street Journal.

I don't want our churches to be like Hydrox cookies. If your congregation died, I wouldn't want it to take five years for people to notice you were gone. What is your local church's connection to your neighborhood, city, or town? What part of your ministry would your community miss?

In Jeremiah 29:4-7, the Lord, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles whom God had sent into exile from

Jerusalem

to

Babylon

: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

I think this is what it means to be a missional church. The missional church is sent by God into the community to live among the people, putting down roots, investing in the local economy, and trying to make it the best place to live in the world. That was hard for the Jews in 586 BC who really wanted to be back in

Jerusalem

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Babylon

were foreign and strange and odd, but that was where God sent them. God wanted His people to interact with the Babylonians, to get to know them, to listen to them, and to care for them. They were to become such an integral part of Babylonian society, that if they were all taken away, they would be sorely missed.

Part of my dream for the church is to be like that. I want the church to move back into the neighborhood. I want the church to be alongside normal, everyday people as they go about their lives, and to be such authentic people of integrity that people see our good works and give glory to God in heaven. I want the church to try some missional experiments where we live. The Church of Jesus Christ has so much potential. We can make such a difference in the world where we live. I want us to be the Church. I don't want us to be the Hydrox cookie.

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