

A Single Sunday

by Cory Bickmore

You may have heard of the Young Single Adult Wards of the LDS church, commonly known as singles wards. These wards are where unmarried Mormon twenty-somethings go on Sunday to learn the gospel and stare at one another, wondering to whom they might propose this week. I am one of these people.

This is a Sunday in the life of me, the average older single attendee of the average singles ward. What follows may or may not be characteristic of the experience. Probably not.

- 11:01 a.m.:** I join the fourteen other young single men scattered towards the rear of the elder's quorum classroom. Our ability to cram in the back rows while avoiding sitting next to one another always impresses me.
- 11:05 a.m.:** An elders quorum president seven years my junior tries to bring the meeting to order, but the Relief Society's hymn drifting in from next door hampers his efforts. To help my spiritual leader, I begin a tally of the most overused words and phrases by today's teachers, speakers, and other participants.
- 11:06 a.m.:** We sing "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel" (first and last verse only) for the fourth time in two months. I yet again think what a grand joke it would be to just once sing "As Sisters in Zion".
- 11:13 a.m.:** The announcements portion of the meeting plods on. I begin to suspect I am the only person with no activity to announce.
- 11:15 a.m.:** A pert young woman enters the room to make an announcement. Murmurs of "wow" and "whoa" ripple through the quorum. Enthralled at her presence, we fail to hear anything she says.
- 11:20 a.m.:** The elders quorum instructor wishes aloud he had less teaching time. He asks us to "bear with" him. I promptly don't.
- 11:22 a.m.:** A good half dozen sign-up sheets make their way around the classroom. I sneak in my own "Sign-up Sheet for Those Who Want No More Sign-up Sheets". A fellow in the next row throws it away, much to my irritation.
- 11:23 p.m.:** Someone in the class utters the day's first marriage reference. Everyone's eyes glaze over. Numerous handhelds come out as a defensive entertainment reflex.
- 11:27 a.m.:** Our instructor exhausts his prepared material. To compensate, he trots out a quarter-hour filibuster containing no less than six sports analogies.
- 11:46 a.m.:** Despite his predicament, the instructor manages to keep us some minutes over. On the bright side, my tally of overused words and phrases is racking up hits big time. "At this time" currently holds a three-point lead, but my money is on "opportunity".
- 11:53 a.m.:** I go Teacher Shopping between the three Sunday School classes. After bouncing back and forth a bit, I settle on the room with the comfiest chairs and the cutest teacher.

- 12:07 p.m.:** The cute Sunday School teacher commits the day's second marriage reference. She compounds the situation by encouraging the males in the room to date more.
- 12:10 p.m.:** The bishop slips into class for no apparent reason. He leaves a short while later. I am perplexed.
- 12:14 p.m.:** My buddy Ben and I engage in a comment war. I win 9-7 when he gets distracted by a game of Tetris on his handheld.
- 12:21 p.m.:** The teacher shares an uplifting story from her mission. I silently applaud her courage and wink at her. She pretends not to notice.
- 12:30 p.m.:** The bishop returns to class and leaves again. I wonder if he has ants in his pants.
- 12:40 p.m.:** I wander into the chapel as Sacrament Meeting is about to begin. The ward population has mysteriously tripled.
- 12:41 p.m.:** I select the pew most likely to entice an attractive girl to sit by me. I keep my eye out for one.
- 12:42 p.m.:** A bulky guy with dark hair sits next to me. He is wearing a pink tie. My hopes are dashed.
- 12:44 p.m.:** With some alarm I notice the meeting program lists three speakers AND a musical number AND a visiting high councilman on stake business along with all the hymns and prayers and ordinary ward business. My empty stomach whimpers with legitimate fear. I take solace in the fact I am a handsome man.
- 12:47 p.m.:** The second counselor crushes my hand while saying he is "glad to see" me. Pink Tie Guy acts like his hand does not hurt during his turn, but I know better.
- 12:50 p.m.:** The bishop begins the meeting on time. I am excited.
- 1:14 p.m.:** With no young children to scurry about, the chapel is wrapped in perfect silence during the sacrament ordinance. I always like this.
- 1:27 p.m.:** The first speaker, a young girl of eighteen, chokes up while giving the analogy of the frog cooking in a slowly warming pot of water. I decide to henceforth oppose cruelty to amphibians.
- 1:31 p.m.:** For some reason, I start singing Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" to myself.
- 1:33 p.m.:** The fellow with the pink tie leaves early. No girl, attractive or otherwise, moves to fill the vacancy.
- 1:36 p.m.:** "Smooth Criminal" continues its romp unabated through my brain.
- 1:40 p.m.:** A male quartet sings their musical number, "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy". It sounds much better than when they sang it last month.

- 1:44 p.m.:** The final speaker mentions his marriage engagement several tens of times more than necessary. He too is wearing a pink tie. I worry my fashion is out of step.
- 1:45 p.m.:** He uses the phrase “concerted effort” to describe the actions of a single person. I make a concerted effort not to laugh out loud.
- 1:56 p.m.** The last speaker dumps the last half of his talk “in the interest of time.” Only my genteel upbringing stops me from dashing up right there to bestow a hug on my new hero.
- 2:00 p.m.:** After the closing prayer, the chapel erupts into a maelstrom of young single adult prattle. I review my tally of the day’s overused Mormon words and phrases. “Opportunity” has defeated “at this time” by a substantial margin, with honorable mentions going to “grateful” and “moisture”.
- 2:02 p.m.:** I take the opportunity to go home and eat a tasty dinner, much to my stomach’s delight at this time.