



Volume 2, Issue 9

West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



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Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?

The Reformation principle of sola Scriptura has to do with the sufficiency of Scripture as our supreme authority in all spiritual matters. Sola Scriptura simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture. It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture. The most ardent defender of sola Scriptura will concede, for example, that Scripture has little or nothing to say about DNA structures, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science. This or that “scientific truth,” for example, may or may not be actually true, whether or not it can be supported by Scripture—but Scripture is a “more sure Word,” standing above all other truth in its authority and certainty. It is “more sure,” according to the apostle Peter, than the data we gather firsthand through our senses (2 Peter 1:19). Therefore, Scripture is the highest and supreme authority on any matter on which it speaks.

But there are many important questions on which Scripture is silent. Sola Scriptura makes no claim to the contrary. Nor does sola Scriptura claim that everything Jesus or the apostles ever taught is preserved in Scripture. It only means that everything necessary, everything binding on our consciences, and everything God requires of us is given to us in Scripture (2 Peter 1:3).

Furthermore, we are forbidden to add to or take away from Scripture (cf. *Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19*). To add to it is to lay on people a burden that God Himself does not intend for them to bear (cf. *Matthew 23:4*).

Scripture is therefore the perfect and only standard of spiritual truth, revealing infallibly all that we must believe in order to be saved and all that we must do in order to glorify God. That—no more, no less—is what sola Scriptura means. - **Dr. John MacArthur**

“The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” - Westminster Confession of Faith - Chapter 1 paragraph 6

“The whole revelation of God concerning all things essential for his own glory, human salvation, faith and life, is either explicitly set down or implicitly contained in the Holy Scriptures. Nothing is ever to be added, whether by a new revelation of the Spirit, or by human traditions.” - Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 - Chapter 1 paragraph 6



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When Is a Church Not a Church?

When is a church not a church? This question has received various answers throughout history, depending on one's perspective and evaluation of certain groups. There exists no monolithic interpretation of what constitutes a true church. However, in classic Christian orthodoxy certain standards have emerged that define what we call "catholic," or universal, Christianity. This universal Christianity points to the essential truths that have been set forth historically in the ecumenical creeds of the first millennium and are part of the confession of virtually every Christian denomination historically. However, there are at least two ways in which a religious group fails to meet the standards of being a church.

The first is when they lapse into a state of apostasy. Apostasy occurs when a church leaves its historic moorings, abandons its historic confessional position, and degenerates into a state where either essential Christian truths are blatantly denied or the denial of such truths is widely tolerated.

Another test of apostasy is at the moral level. A church becomes apostate de facto when it sanctions and encourages gross and heinous sins. Such practices may be found today in the controversial systems of denominations, such as mainline Episcopalianism and mainline Presbyterianism, both of which have moved away from their historic confessional moorings as well their confessional stands on basic ethical issues.

The decline of a church into apostasy must be differentiated from those communions that never actually achieved the status of a viable church in the first place. It is with respect to this phenomenon that the consideration of cults and heretical sects is usually delineated. Here again we find no universal monolithic definition for what it is that constitutes a cult or a sect. Both terms are capable of more than one meaning or denotation. For example, all churches that practice rites and rituals have at their core a concern for their "cultus." The cultus is the organized body of worship that is found in any church. However, this cultic dimension of legitimate churches can be distorted to such a degree that the use of the term cult is applied in its pejorative sense. For example, the dictionary may define the term "cult" as a religion that is considered to be false, unorthodox, or extremist. When we talk about cults in this regard, what comes to mind are the radical distortions in fringe groups, such as the Jonestown phenomenon. There, a group of devotees attached themselves to their megalomaniacal leader, Jim Jones, and illustrated their devotion to such a degree that they willingly submitted to Jones' direction to take their Kool-aid laced with cyanide. This is cultic behavior with a vengeance. The same kind of thing could be seen among the Branch Davidians, the followers of Father Divine in Philadelphia, and other lesser groups that have come and gone over the course of church history.

It is noteworthy that almost any compendium that treats the history of cults will include within its studies large bodies of religion such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless, the sheer size and endurance of such groups tend to give them more credibility as time passes and as more people associate with their beliefs. When we look at groups, such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, we find elements of truth within their confessions. Yet at the same time, they express clear denials of what historically may be considered essential truths of the Christian faith.



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When Is a Church Not a Church? - Continued

This certainly includes their unabashed denial of the deity of Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons have this denial in common. Though both place Jesus in some type of exalted position within their respective creeds, He does not attain the level of deity. Both groups consider Christ an exalted creature. Following the thinking of the ancient heretic Arius, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses argue that the New Testament does not teach the deity of Christ; rather, they argue it teaches He is the exalted firstborn of all creation. They say He is the first creature made by God, who then is given superior power and authority over the rest of creation. Though Jesus is lifted up in such Christology, it still falls far short of Christian orthodoxy, which confesses the deity of Christ. Passages in the New Testament such as Jesus being "begotten" and His being the firstborn of creation" are incorrectly used to justify this creaturely definition of Christ.

In the first three centuries of Christian history, the biblical passage that dominated reflection on the church's understanding of Christ was the prologue of the gospel of John. This prologue contains the affirmation of Christ's being the Logos, or the eternal Word of God. John declares in his gospel that the Logos was "with God in the beginning, and was God." This "with God" suggests a distinction between the Logos and God, but the identification by the linking verb "was" indicates an identity between the Logos and God. The way in which this identity is denied by Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and other cultists is by substituting the indefinite article in the text, rendering it that the Logos was "a god." In order to wrest this interpretation from the text, one must have a prior affirmation of some form of polytheism. Such polytheism is utterly foreign to Judeo-Christian theology, where deity is understood in monotheistic terms.

The threat of cultic distortions is something the church must struggle with in every generation and in every age. It is also important to understand that even legitimate churches may contain within it practices that reflect the behavior of the cults. Cults can emerge within the structures of certain churches. In the Roman communion, for example, we see in Haiti a mixture of Roman Catholic theology with the cultic practices of voodoo. Also in that same communion there is no question that large groups of people venerate Mary to a degree that is beyond the limits espoused by that church itself, degenerating their worship into a cult mentality. But such can be the case among Lutherans, Presbyterians, or any group, when orthodoxy is sacrificed for the devotion to idols. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

What's in a Name?

"Hallowed be your name" is what Jesus taught His disciples to say in prayer (Matthew 6:9). It expresses a desire that the Father will be revered and praised and spoken about in a manner that befits His resplendent glory and dignity. After hearing God speak and seeing a bush on fire with no apparent sign of being burned up, Moses asked, "What is your name?" In reply, God first said, "I am who I am" (or "I will be what I will be"), then shortened it to "I am," then to "the Lord" (I AM translates the Hebrew Yahweh or YHWH, known as the tetragrammaton, a Greek term meaning "four letters." English translations used to render it as Jehovah; Exodus 3:6, 13-16). Thus, God shows himself as the One who exists, eternally and without change, who is utterly trustworthy and dependable.



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What's in a Name? - Continued

God's name is who He is. And Yahweh or YHWH acts as a synecdoche—the part representing the whole. Thus, David sang, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens” (Psalm 8:1). And in the Third Commandment, God tells us very clearly that we are not to misuse His name: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). So seriously do the Jews fear misusing God's name that they refuse to utter it at all. But that is more superstition than obedience; God wants us to use His name—but with respect and dignity.

THE FINE PRINT

Commandments have positive and negative things to teach us. *First*, let us consider the negative. The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way: “The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known” (A. 55). Using God's name in a frivolous or insincere way is wrong. Take bad language, for example. Television and movies are so littered with expletives that we have almost become immune to their destructive power. The use of “Jesus,” “Christ,” or “God” as a mere expletive, vocalizing frustration or anger or disgust, is blasphemy, make no mistake about it.

Or, take promises we make. The Old Testament spoke strongly against the practice of adding God's name to a promise to add extra assurance of its trustworthiness (Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 5:2; Zechariah 5:4). And Jesus revealed the Pharisees' insincerity and hypocrisy, masquerading as pompous piety, when they said promises made that excluded God's name could be broken with impunity (Matthew 5:33–37). The statement “I give you my word” ought to mean what it says. Christians should make promises guardedly and keep them carefully.

But we are merely seeing the tip of an iceberg. The truth is, we violate the third commandment whenever we invoke God's name lightly on a T-shirt or bumper sticker (if we employ either, we'd better not intentionally be in violation of traffic laws); as a patriotic confirmation that “God is on our side,” justifying all ends and means of national and civic involvement; and in a thousand other ways.

Alarming, we trivialize and minimize God in our most sacred acts, producing what David Wells calls a “weightlessness” about God. “La parole a été donnée à l'homme pour déguiser sa pensée – the reason for words is to conceal thought,” a French diplomat once said to a Spanish Ambassador. This is so true. Too often in worship, we speak without knowing—or caring—what we say. Careless and casual worship is sin:

“Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.” (Ecclesiastes 5:2)



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What's in a Name? - Continued

WONDERFUL NAME

What of the positive duties of this command? The Shorter Catechism puts it this way: “The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God’s names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works” (A. 54).

Think of Jesus as Lord—the Name above all names—at which every knee will one day bow and confess that He is Lord (Philippines 2:10–11). What will be true then ought to be true now. “How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds,” John Newton wrote, and Christians agree with all their hearts.

In particular, God is to be thought of and spoken about (and to) in the language of worship:

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. (Psalm 29:2; 96:8)

Sing the glory of his name. (66:2)

Blessed be his glorious name forever. (72:19)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! (103:1)

That is what we are to aim for—living moment by moment in God’s presence, praising His name. Careful, dignified, thoughtful words—said, prayed, sung, listened to, “seen” in the sacraments, expressed with purpose and intent—should characterize our worship. How difficult this is, and how much we need to learn it. ~ ***Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas - senior minister of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, S.C., and Robert Strong Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta***

Monster Lies about Babies’ Lives

The work of Planned Parenthood, dedicated to aborting babies, is inexplicably called “women’s healthcare.”

Hillary Clinton accuses those who wish to end the harvesting and sale of baby parts of leading a “full-on assault on women’s health.” She represents Planned Parenthood as “quality, affordable, healthcare for women.” The “quality” is dubious; it is “affordable” only because taxes support the massive killing machine to the tune of half a billion dollars annually; and “healthcare for women,” though it may include a number of gynecological tests and services, essentially involves the murder of 330,000 babies each year, which stretches the term “euphemism” beyond comprehensible limits.



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Monster Lies about Babies' Lives - Continued

Today's cultural progressives believe they have cornered "the right [and moral] side of history," leading to the global unity of all peoples. Ban Ki-moon, the UN General Secretary, says it clearly: "the United Nations is the hope and home of all humankind." This same vision motivated the original "united" nations at Babel—"nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them" (Genesis 11:6). But the parallels go further. Like Babel, a tower/temple to join heaven and earth, contemporary progressivism, in its celebration of human unity and the autonomous self, hates any notion of God as the transcendent Creator and worships and serves creation (Romans 1:25). Inevitably, its utopian schemes are a form of pagan Oneism, one more expression of idolatry. It is therefore terminally and incurably flawed at its heart, for at its center, it is driven by what the Apostle Paul calls "the Lie."

Change the Language

An agenda thus motivated can only succeed by hiding inconvenient truth behind a façade of hypocrisy, deliberate obfuscation and outright deceit. Take one example from North American culture. Once in a while, the cover of this God-denying agenda is blown, as we have recently seen in the exposé of Planned Parenthood's scandalous trafficking in aborted baby-parts. We may not yet be at the stage of George Orwell's 1984 totalitarian State, where "The Ministry of Peace" actually fostered war, but the work of Planned Parenthood [PP], dedicated to aborting babies, is inexplicably called "women's healthcare." The machine of defensive half-truths and untruths kicks into gear, with the astute use of moral-sounding language.

Terms like "a woman's right to choose" sound very moral (like the name "Planned Parenthood"), but a woman choosing to drive down the left side of a highway into on-coming traffic denies the right to life to unsuspecting drivers, just as abortion denies the right to life to unborn babies. The easy term "Free Sex" from the Sixties, created this abortion industry, but nothing is free. The price has been heavy—53 million aborted babies since 1973—all for sexual freedom, the normalization of cruelty, and the loss of cultural virtue.

Attack Anyone Who Questions

PP's extremist abortion policy would be illegal in 93% of the world, yet somehow it is the courageous journalists who are called "monsters" or "extremists." Attorney General, Lorretta Lynch, has referred to investigating the videos in the most ambiguous language, leading many to wonder whether she will in fact be investigating the filmmakers rather than Planned Parenthood. The "wise ones" in the US Senate calmly refuse to back any effort to defund the program; the President gives PP not only his, but God's blessing; and mainline liberal denominations declare: "People who work for Planned Parenthood are doing God's work. For this we are grateful."

Some are trying to avoid watching these videos, but their content shows just how calloused and evil PP is. They show the overtly criminal medical procedures that render second trimester infants "more intact" for trafficking: poisons are not used to kill the children in the womb, which provides many more usable parts to sell, but risks live births.



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Monster Lies about Babies' Lives - Continued

The videos show a PP employee who, while sorting out the body parts of a dissected child, exclaims “another boy... here’s the heart... do people want to do stuff with the eyeballs?”

Another sees the financial bonanza: “My department contributes so much to the bottom line of our organization here...If we alter our process, and we are able to obtain intact fetal cadavers, we can make it part of the budget.” These videos have shown what so many in the past (as a matter of policy) have refused to show—images of mangled babies who have been murdered in the name of “women’s rights” and “health.”

The bottom line of the global utopia is written in the blood of unborn babies. Can we trust such callous people with the creation of a just society? God has three modes of intervention. (1) disperse this evil coalition (as with Babel); (2) give them over to the consequences of their actions, which will lead at least some to repentance and a discovery of the Gospel, or, (3) come in final judgment. Let us call on the Creator of life to have mercy on our culture of death, and bring gracious forgiveness to many abortionists. ~ *Aquila Report - Written by Joshua Gielow | Monday, August 10, 2015*

Book Review

The Glory of Heaven (Hardcover)

Dr. John MacArthur



A quick look at a list of bestselling books and you’ll see that heaven is a hot topic. After all, who doesn’t wonder and long to know more about the place you’ll forever live in the presence of God, untouched by sorrow, pain, and fear. What will it be like? What will you do in heaven? How will you recognize and relate to loved ones there?

The problem is, runaway books about heaven are selling—and misleading people—by the millions. They are filled with fabricated, fictional accounts that claim to tell the truth about heaven. Dr. John MacArthur critiques those claims—and offers an in-depth, biblical explanation of God’s eternal city—in a fully revised, new edition of *The Glory of Heaven*. You’ll discover what the Bible really teaches about your glorious future home.



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Be Careful of Nice People

Niceness doesn't require that work of the Spirit. In fact, niceness is often a clever ruse Satan employs to fool us into following ungodly leaders. Be careful around nice people. Evil and ungodly men often rely upon niceness to cover their sin. Where Christians can be fast and blunt in defending the truth, unbelievers—and especially unbelievers claiming to be Christians—can look good in contrast. They can seem so nice as they nicely undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith.

Now you be nice to your sister.” “Make sure you play nice tonight.” “He is such a nice young man.” As human beings, it seems that we are drawn to niceness. We like nice people and encourage people to behave in nice ways. We dislike people who aren't nice or who don't behave in nice ways. We teach our children to be nice and juxtapose niceness with a host of vices: grumpiness, cruelty, mean-spiritedness.

In Galatians 5, Paul contrasts the qualities of fleshly, worldly people with the qualities of Spirit-filled, godly people. He lists the fruit of the Spirit, those character traits that ought to mark God's people, saying, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (vv. 22–23). Conspicuously absent from Paul's list is niceness. Kindness is there; patience and gentleness too. But not niceness.

Why isn't niceness a fruit of the Spirit? Because niceness is a hollow trait that a human can generate even without the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Niceness may require some force of will in the face of disagreement or controversy. It may require restraint. But it does not require an inward transformation.

True love, true joy, true faithfulness and gentleness—these are all qualities for which we are completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit's work in conforming us to the image of Christ through the Word of God. As we immerse ourselves in God's Word, as we carefully seek God and His will through the Bible, the Holy Spirit gradually but surely grants us these qualities in growing measure. Now we are able to love—truly love—whereas before we could only hate and brood and love selfishly; now we are able to display patience whereas before we would always explode with anger or perhaps simply simmer with anger; now we are able to be gentle whereas before we were so consistently harsh.

But niceness? Niceness doesn't require that work of the Spirit. In fact, niceness is often a clever ruse Satan employs to fool us into following ungodly leaders. Be careful around nice people. Evil and ungodly men often rely upon niceness to cover their sin. Where Christians can be fast and blunt in defending the truth, unbelievers—and especially unbelievers claiming to be Christians—can look good in contrast. They can seem so nice as they nicely undermine the very foundations of the Christian faith. Their smiles, their soft words, their sympathetic questions, their niceness—these are all tools designed to mask their opposition to God.

It is not bad to be nice. It is not an evil trait. But it is far better to strive for the higher qualities, the Spirit-given qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law, because such Spirit-given qualities cannot be faked forever. ~ *The Aquila Report* - *Written by Tim Challies | Sunday, August 9, 2015*



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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Chapter 18

1. Temporary believers and other unregenerate people may deceive themselves with futile and false hopes and unspiritual presumptions that they are in favour with God and in a state of salvation, but their hope will perish. Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may be certainly assured in this life that they are in the state of grace; they may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, knowing that such hope will never make them ashamed.
2. This certainty is not mere conjecture or probability based on a fallible hope. Rather it is an infallible assurance of faith based on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel, on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit (about which promises have been made), and on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption who witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God. As the fruit of this assurance, the Spirit keeps our hearts both humble and holy.
3. This infallible assurance is not an essential part of faith, for a true believer may wait a long time, and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it. Yet we may obtain it without extraordinary revelation and by the right use of ordinary means, for we are enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given to us by God. Therefore it is the duty of everyone to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure, so that their hearts may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in carrying out the duties of obedience. These duties are the natural fruits of this assurance, for it is far from inclining people to loose living.
4. In various ways true believers may have their assurance of salvation shaken, diminished, or interrupted. This may be because of their negligence in preserving it, or by falling into some particular sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit, or by some sudden or forceful temptation, or by God withdrawing the light of his countenance and causing even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light. Yet believers are never destitute of the seed of God and the life of faith, the love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart and conscience of duty. Out of these things, this assurance may in due time be revived by the operation of the Spirit, and in the mean time they are preserved from utter despair.



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This is a Test for us Older Kids

This may be harder than you think. The answers will be on the tip of your tongue but you just can't quite remember the correct answer. Don't look on Page 11 for the answers until you have tried to figure it out. This is a test for us 'older' kids. Please don't cheat! Answer them first.

1. After the Lone Ranger saved the day and rode off into the sunset, the grateful citizens would ask, Who was that masked man? Invariably, someone would answer, I don't know, but he left this behind. What did he leave behind? _____.
2. When the Beatles first came to the U.S. In early 1964, we all watched them on The _____ Show.
3. 'Get your kicks, _____!'
4. 'The story you are about to see is true. The names have been changed to _____!'
5. 'In the jungle, the mighty jungle, _____!'
6. After the Twist, The Mashed Potato, and the Watusi, we 'danced' under a stick that was lowered as low as we could go in a dance called the '_____!'
7. Nestle's makes the very best.... _____!'
8. Satchmo was America's 'Ambassador of Goodwill.' Our parents shared this great jazz trumpet player with us. His name was _____.
9. What takes a licking and keeps on ticking? _____.
10. Red Skeleton's hobo character was named _____ and Red always ended his television show by saying, 'Good Night, and '_____!'
11. Some Americans who protested the Vietnam War did so by burning their _____.
12. The cute little car with the engine in the back and the trunk in the front was called the VW. What other names did it go by? _____ & _____.
13. In 1971, singer Don MacLean sang a song about, 'the day the music died.' This was a tribute to _____.
14. We can remember the first satellite placed into orbit. The Russians did it. It was called _____.
15. One of the big fads of the late 50's and 60's was a large plastic ring that we twirled around our waist. It was called the _____.
16. Remember LS/MFT _____ / _____?
17. Hey Kids! What time is it? It's _____!
18. Who knows what secrets lie in the hearts of men? Only The _____ Knows!
19. There was a song that came out in the 60's that was "a grave yard smash". It's name was the _____!
20. Alka Seltzer used a "boy with a tablet on his head" as it's Logo/Representative. What was the boy's name? _____



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Birthday and Anniversary Corner - September 2015

Birthdays

Abigail Ruth Lootens - September 3
Ben Purser - September 3
Zachary Allesandro - September 9
Jonathan Dillard - September 15
Ruth Thomas - September 23

Anniversaries

Eddie and Melanie Massie - September 4

Answer to the Questions on Page 10

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. The Lone Ranger left behind a silver bullet. | 12. Beetle or Bug |
| 2. The Ed Sullivan Show | 13. Buddy Holly |
| 3. On Route 66 | 14. Sputnik |
| 4. To protect the innocent | 15. Hoola-Hoop |
| 5. The Lion Sleeps Tonight | 16. Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco |
| 6. The limbo | 17. Howdy Doody Time |
| 7. Chocolate | 18. Shadow |
| 8. Louis Armstrong | 19. Monster Mash |
| 9. The Timex watch | 20. Speedy |
| 10. Freddy, The Freeloader and 'Good Night and God Bless.' | |
| 11. Draft cards (Bras were also burned. Not flags, as some have guessed) | |

Disclaimer

The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it's leadership.



West Suffolk Baptist Church

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