**Chapter 12: Religion: The Meaning of Sacred Meaning   
This American Life**

**Recommended Readings**

Geneive Adbo, Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11 Adbo examines the experiences of Muslims in America following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. She finds that many Muslims feel that they've been driven to separatism because of the way they were treated by their neighbors following 9-11.

Kai Erikson, Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of DevianceIn this book, Erikson examines the ways that deviance within a religious community can have positive outcomes for the entire group.

Leon Festinger et al., When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological StudyThis classic book follows a UFO cult that formed and predicted the end of the world. It explains what happened after the members gave away all of their personal possessions and the end of the world failed to materialize.

Aminah McCloud, African American Islam Using personal interviews, McCloud traces the history of the African American Islam movement and the impact that Islam has in the lives of African American women in particular.

Thomas C. Reeves, The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal ChristianityReeves argues that people are leaving mainline churches in favor of more fundamentalist religions because of the growing secularization of America. He further examines the history of religious groups becoming involved in politics.

Anthony Storr, Feet of Clay: Saints, Sinners, and Madmen: A Study of GurusIn this book, Storr analyzes various religious gurus to find commonalities among their upbringing and psyches.

Stephen R. Warner, New Wine in Old Wineskins: Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small Town ChurchUsing a case study of one church in small town America, Warner tracks the resurgence of the evangelical movement in the United States through the struggle of the congregation to shape their church's doctrine.

Mark Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex & Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers*

Regnerus uses survey and interview data to detail the relationship between religion and sexuality in the lives of American teenagers. Regnerus examines teens of many religious traditions—from evangelical to secular—to show how their sexuality is influenced by their faith.

David Sloan Wilson, *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*

Wilson suggests that instead of seeing religion and evolution as complementary concepts, arguing that religion itself is a form of social evolution. He strips the belief system from religion; we are more able to see its cultural force in shaping human interaction.

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*

In this text, Stark and Finke show the division between faith and the social factors of religion. They argue that, while sociology has no ability to understand issues of faith and beliefs, sociology can uncover a great deal by working to understand the social dynamics of religion.

Bartowski, John, and Helen A. Regis. *Charitable Choices: Religion, Race, and Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era.* Among other features, this book presents a history of faith-based welfare initiatives in the United States.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*

A work from the Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics, this text provides data on religion in many cultures and societies to show how secularization is impacting various world cultures. They show that religion, despite trends of secularization, is still a strong force throughout the world and continues to persist even after many theorists suggest it would fade.

Margaret Thaler Singer. *Cults in Our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against Their Hidden Menace*

One of the more interesting aspects of religion is examining the powerful allure of cults. Singer reveals what cults really are and how they work, focusing specifically on the coercive persuasion techniques of charismatic leaders seeking money and power. The book contains fascinating updates on several well-known cults and makes a connection between cults and terrorism