

# REFLECTION PAGE

A weekly small group study guide and discussion starter  
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## 1 Timothy 3:14-16

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, <sup>15</sup>if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. <sup>16</sup>Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great:

He was revealed in flesh,  
vindicated in spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among Gentiles,  
believed in throughout the world,  
taken up in glory.

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## *Stuff that Word-Nerds Might Like:*

- + The word “religion” doesn’t appear all that often in scripture - just five times in the New Testament, NRSV.
- + In 1 Tim 3:16, the word that the NRSV translates “religion” is *eusebia*, and that Greek word itself is not always translated “religion;” in 1 Tim 4:7 for example, it is translated “godliness.”
- + The word “church” is relatively common in scripture, with over 100 appearances in the New Testament, NRSV.
- + Most frequently the word translated as “church” is the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “those who are called out.”
- In your own words, what is the difference between “religion” and “church?”
- How are the two ideas similar?
- How are they different?

## *The mystery of the week...*

The mystery that we are investigating this week is “The Mystery of Religion.”

- In the best case scenario, what should religion be? ... what should religion do?
- Why do you suppose religion is found in so many different cultures and places all around the world, even very different cultures? What makes it so universal?
- And the flipside: Why do you suppose religion is a motivating factor in so many conflicts, even violent war and horrible oppression?
- If you were able to place the good stuff of religion on a balance scale with the not so good stuff of religion, what would that scale look like? Why do you think that is?

## Digging Out a Seminary Book...

There is a classic text called “Models of the Church” by Avery Dulles. It has been a staple of seminary textbooks for years and years. In it Dulles offers the following as models for the church -

- *The Church as Institution*
- *The Church as Mystical Communion*
- *The Church as Sacrament*
- *The Church as Herald*
- *The Church as Servant*

Which of these terms do you find especially intriguing?  
Which would you like to learn more about?  
Which of these terms feels least like “church” to you?  
Why is that?

“Theologically the term ‘church’ refers to the mystery of Christ as realized in the community of those who believe in him and are assembled in his name.” - Dulles

- How do you respond to this quote? What does it mean to you?
- How is the mystery of Christ realized (made real) in the church today?

### Passing Fancy?

It has become quite common to hear a version of the following sentiment:

**I love Jesus,  
but I hate the church.**

- Have you heard this somewhere?
- How do you respond?

Here’s a video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIAhDGYlpqY>

making the rounds these days that expresses the idea very poetically.

- Why do you suppose it is so trendy these days to express this anti-church / pro-Jesus rhetoric?

### World Religions

According to the website [religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org):

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Percent of World Population</u>
Christianity	32%
Islam	22%
Hinduism	13%
No Religion	12%
Chinese Folk Rel.	6%
Buddhism	6%
Tribal Religion	4%
Atheist	2%
“New Religions”	2%
Judaism	<1%

(All other religions are less than 1% each.)

Source: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm>

### Quotable:

“If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion (*threskeia*) that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”  
(James 1:26-27, NRSV)

- What do you think of this definition of religion?
- What does it mean to “keep oneself unstained by the world?”