

How We View the World

Ethnocentricity and the World Christian

Ethnocentricity is characterized by

- Narrowness of thinking
- Fear of other peoples
- Not wanting to change
- A desire to impose one's own views on the rest of the world
- A feeling of being "right"
- A sense of superiority
- The notion that the farther away something is, the less important it is

An ETHNOCENTRIC worldview says:

- Our country is the best.
- America is at the "center" of the world.
- Our way is morally better—other ways are inferior or morally contaminated.
- Our belief system should be imposed on others—for their own benefit.

A WORLD CHRISTIAN view says:

The world around us is a complex and changing "quilt" of different ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and cultures. In Christ, we are constantly being renewed, being made new in the midst of this flux.

We allow God to change us as we come into contact with other cultures and experience the world's diversity and complexity.

A WORLD CHRISTIAN has greater awareness of others and deeper vision of their needs. We no longer wait for others to come to us, rather, we reach out to others. We can be glad and rejoice in the wonderful variety and diversity that God has created in skin color, language, customs, music, and art.

We no longer see ourselves at the center of God's plan, but become vehicles for God to reach out to others. We "decrease" so that others may "increase."

When Americans bathe, they soak, wash and rinse their bodies in the same water—through they would never wash their clothes and dishes that way. The Japanese, who use different water for each of these steps, find the American way of bathing hard to understand, even "dirty."

An orthodox Hindu from India considers it "dirty" to eat with knives, forks, and spoons instead of with his own clean fingers.

Is it dirtier to spit and blow your nose on the street or to carry it around with you in a little piece of cloth that you keep in your pocket and reuse regularly?

Which is better or worse? Neither—they're just DIFFERENT!¹

1. From "Short Term Mission Trips: Preparing The Team," by Stan de Voogd, Presbyterian Border Ministries. Used with permission.