

## An Ethnographic Worldview Identification Orientation for Use by Volunteer and Short-Term Personnel

**Worldview Identification.** The setting for any ethnographic worldview identification should be an ethnolinguistic people group. The question now arises: How do I identify a person's, a family's, or an ethnolinguistic people group's worldview? Being that this is a worldview orientation and identification module for short-term involvement or for initial exploration of cultural and worldview-orientation of an ethnolinguistic people group, a very simple identification process follows. Along with the identification process will be a basic twelve (12) question worldview instrument.

- Be aware that the aim is to identify and compare the engaged people's worldview with a New Testament Christian's worldview.
- As one does that, remember that four (4) distinct worldviews are operative at any given time which should be taken into consideration. They are:
  - The worldview of the people being observed whose worldview is being identified
  - The worldview of the observer, identifier, evangelizer who will continually have trouble keeping their own worldview beliefs and interpretations from coloring what they observe
  - The Biblical worldview that is distinct from the other two worldviews and the worldview that will be held up as a mirror against with the worldview under consideration is being compared and judged.
  - The fourth is the worldview one is attempting to identify of the soon to be engaged people group. An evangelizer can sometimes find an existing edition of an identified worldview of the people being studied. If one is available use it, unless it is out of date or poorly. Just any ole worldview document won't do.
- Conduct worldview identification in the heart language idiom of the person, family, society or ethnic people group. Their worldview resides in their idiom, even down to their own dialect level. Conduct all worldview identification in that language or dialect.
- The initial stage of worldview identification should be through multiple days of unobtrusive (inconspicuous) observation of the people.
- Conduct worldview observation and interviews of the people within the core setting of their ethne and not within the fringe people's setting. The only time that identifying the fringe people's worldview is when one is only engaging fringe people for evangelization.
- It is best that foreigners, expatriate persons, secure and train local, heart language speakers in soliciting and conducting worldview observations and interviews
- The presence of foreigners and non-heart language speakers almost always evoke a bias from the people being observed and interviewed.
- Only in emergency situations should foreigners, as defined by a people group, conduct the observations and interviews. And, even then, local, translators secured from within the people group's core population should be used.
- As much as is possible, the translators and informers that are used should be representative of the characteristics of the people group's core population.
- Observation notes should be carefully and unobtrusively taken.
- After numerous days of observations and note taking, formulate from the notes findings as to the common worldview practices, characteristics and beliefs of the core people.
- Worldview questions are asked only after observations have given the observers a fairly good picture and understanding of cultural patterns, habits and beliefs. The questions are asked to determine if what was concluded from observations is true and to refine the findings resulting from the observations.

**Worldview Document Conclusion.** Again, this document was prepared for short-term cultural explorers, engagers, and witnesses who will be with the people group for too short a time to embark on identifying a traditional, in-depth, worldview document. Initially, use the worldview to compare their worldview to a Christian worldview. Next, discover barriers, bridges and gatekeepers.

## **A Sample Worldview Identification Questionnaire For Gaining An Initial Lay Look Into A People's Worldview**

1. **What do the persons within this ethnolinguistic people group call themselves?** What do their neighbors and the government in their country call them?
2. **What is the status of language use within the ethne—people group? (Identify the heart language, including dialects, of the people from birth to five years of age.** From six years of age on, they may learn in school or in society another language, but remember that later learned language was not the language that formed their basic worldview. The aim is to determine the language, the dialect, the idiom that served to impart the basics of their worldview to them. Remember, each person's worldview is housed in daily, "ordinary" lifestyle events and not in concepts, belief or values that they recognize as worldview items.
3. **What is the status of communication and learning among them?** (Are they oral or literate communicators and learners? Use the Learning Grid to record this.)
4. **What is the status of Scripture among them?** (This has multiple levels or facets. You want to know what "Scriptures" they consider sacred and of higher value than the Christian Scriptures? Use the Scripture Use Matrix in determining these realities.)
5. **How is the typical family organized and consequently, what is the typical function of family members at various ages and relational levels?** (Determine and draw a family kinship chart as observed and verified through questions. Identify the expected and typical roles of a husband, a wife, parents, children, male children, female children, relatives, and other common household members, related or not.)
6. **What functional roles do family, friends, neighbors, community and society play in a person's development of appropriate cultural behavior, beliefs, habits and lifestyle as they age?**
7. **What role does religion and the religious play in the up-bringing and continued adult lifestyles of persons within the people group?**
8. **How do family, friends, neighbors, community and society regulate, announce, identify, persecute personal or group offenders and offences?** (Determine common offences and a hierarchy of their seven deadly sins.)
9. **What is the understanding, attitude and activities of traditional people in this people group concerning Christians and Christianity?** (This is a general question as to what they think and believe.)
10. **What does a person, or family, or unrelated group of individuals, risk or gain in this people group if they embrace Christ and Christianity?** (This question narrows to ask what happens when actual, known individuals embrace Christ and Christianity.)
11. **What is this culture's view of leaders, a good leader's profile and characteristics and the ways this people group recognizes good leaders?** ("Good" is a term defined by them as they affirm and recognize a leader?)
12. **What are the eight to ten most offensive cultural indiscretions or offences that a person or family could commit within this people group?** (Consequently, how does a person, or persons, who have committed these indiscretions, get forgiveness for having committed them?) Ask this same question about those outside their ethne.
13. **Who are the most respected and powerful persons within this people group?** (The question does not ask for names, but for positions and roles.)

**Worldview Document Conclusion.** Again, this document was prepared for short-term cultural explorers, engagers, and witnesses who will be with the people group too short a time to embark on identifying a traditional, in-depth, worldview. It is designed for those who want to learn about a people group's worldview in order to understand how to engage, what barriers, bridges and gatekeepers exist and how to evangelize by effectively engaging actual worldview issues in ways that will avoid syncretism.