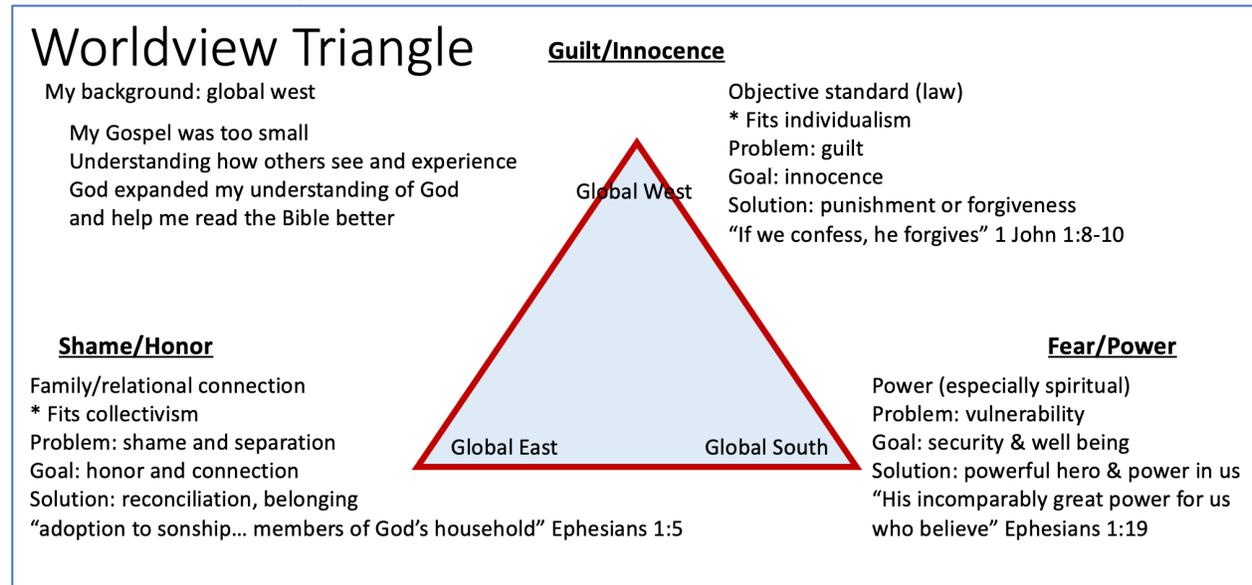


Worldview Triangle



We're going to take a look at the worldview triangle. If you look online for something called "The 3D Gospel", you will find additional resources, and that's a source of a number of things that have helped me in better understanding these things.

I first want to say about myself that my connection is with the "global west", having grown up in the United States. What we'll look at here I am not fluent (so to speak) in all of these world views. The one that's most natural for me to talk about is what connects with the "global west." I'll describe the others the best I can. And the wonderful thing in our church is that we have people who can better describe these other aspects of people's worldviews.

So the three major worldviews, at the points of the triangle... We'll talk about guilt and innocence, and we'll talk about fear and power, and we'll talk about shame and honor.

Something to highlight about each of these is kind of the fundamental idea about it, that in guilt and innocence, the central idea is an objective standard. Often we speak about that objective standard as "law." It could be the law in society, or it could be a moral law, or the law of God.

In fear and power, we tend to think about power itself (unsurprisingly). But very often this power is a spiritual power. Things that have get a lot of attention are thinking about spirits and powers that are beyond what we can see, and yet they affect us and we experience them. But I think that a power orientation also can apply when the powers aren't necessarily specifically in the spiritual realm as well.

In shame and honor, a fundamental orientation is about family and relationships. So what's very important is how I connect with other people.

Just to say briefly, guilt and innocence fits very well with cultures that are individualistic, and shame and honor fits very well with cultures that are more collectivist.

As we go through these, just to highlight it, in general the "global west" tends to be toward the part of the triangle that focuses on guilt and innocence. The "global east," including the Middle East and further east, tends to be oriented towards shame and honor. And as a very rough approximation, the "global south" has a greater orientation to fear and power.

So looking back to guilt and innocence, we think about the problem, that our real problem in guilt and innocence culture, is guilt, when I do something that violates the objective standard. The goal is innocence, and so I want to show that somehow I'm okay, that I've done the right thing, it's not against the standard.

The problem in a fear and power culture is vulnerability, when there are powers that can harm me and I can't stop that. So the goal is security and well-being. I want to be in a place of safety.

In the shame and honor cultures, the problem is shame and separation, that often when shame is encountered, one of the solutions to that shame, is that the source of the shame is separated. So the goal is honor and connection.

When we look at when a problem comes, so for instance in guilt and innocence. when the problem comes of guilt, then the solution tends to be either punishment, that some payment is made, or forgiveness. There needs to be a statement that says the standard somehow is not being enforced, that there's a release from that.

In fear and power the solution is a powerful hero. So in some cultures, this relates to a witch doctor or patron saint or a spiritual force that is on our side.

In shame and honor, the solution is reconciliation. It's restoring that relationship.

So in the Bible, we have each of these represented. For guilt and innocence, we have forgiveness, that if we confess our sins, then we say, "He is faithful and just, and will forgive us." (This is from 1 John 1.)

For fear and power, Ephesians tells us about God's incomparably great power that is at work for us who believe (from Ephesians 1).

Ephesians also talks about, for shame and honor, our adoption to sonship (in Ephesians 1). That we are changed from being enemies of God to being his friends.

When I look at this, I realize that my Gospel growing up was too small. I thought that the Gospel was entirely about guilt and innocence, and the other things, maybe you could describe it in ways that fit that, but it really was about guilt and innocence. What's been wonderful for me is to encounter people and resources that have helped me see that the Gospel includes all of

these things. Others have helped me better understand aspects of God and of the Gospel I was completely blind to. This is the joy that I have come to have a larger and more accurate view of God. I'm better able to read the Bible because of ways people have helped me to see the worldviews that were not a part of my experience growing up.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some songs that might be sung in church that highlight each of the corners of the worldview triangle?
2. What passages in the Bible highlight each of the corners of the worldview triangle?
3. Which of these corners is most natural for you? Which is harder to make sense of?