Ethnic Group vs. Religious Group

What’s the difference?
Ethnic group vs. Religious group

Q: What is the difference between an ethnic group and a religious group?
Definitions

Ethnic Group
- An **ethnic group** is a group of humans whose members identify with each other, through a **common heritage** that is real or assumed.
- This common heritage may be based upon a
  - common ancestry (lineage)
  - history / traditions
  - beliefs / customs
  - language
  - shared territory / nationality
  - physical appearance / race

Religious Group
- People who share a common belief system/ people who follow the same religion
- a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe
- usually involving devotional and ritual observances
- often containing a moral code governing or dictating people’s behavior.
Some words used to refer to a group as a separate ethnic group are: tribe, clan, kinship, lineage, family, society, community and heritage.

The language we speak is always an important part of our cultural/ethnic identity.
Let’s do the math…

- Q: How many countries are there in the world?
  - A: About 200.
- Q: How many languages are there in the world?
  - A: Roughly 7,000
- THEREFORE, ETHNIC GROUPS ARE NOT DEFINED BY POLITICAL BORDERS
Ethnic group and Language

- Language often helps to define an ethnic group.
- Language is also the vehicle for culture, which is particularly significant for an ethnic group.
Other factors of ethnic groups

- Ancestry, history, customs, and traditions give us the common traits related to the past of the group.
- Shared territory is common location and physical features shared by the group.
- Physical appearance are shared characteristics concerning what you look like.
Ethnic Groups Review

- Ethnic groups share many common characteristics, such as…
  - language
  - similar physical features
  - customs and traditions

- Can you give an example of an ethnic group in Southwest Asia?
  - Arabs, Kurds, Persians, Turks, Bedouins,
Religious groups

- Some examples include:
  - Christian
  - Muslim (a person who follows Islam)
  - Judaism
  - Buddhism
  - Shinto
  - Hinduism

To help you understand each group ask questions like…
- What are some of the basic ideas of each of these groups?
- Do they have a religious text?
- Do they believe in a god or many gods?
- Do they have a place of worship?
It can be confusing because...

- By sharing a common religion, people can belong to the same ethnic group
- BUT
- A religious group can include many different ethnic groups

You may be asking HUH?, WHAT?
Some examples:

- The Christian religion is a religion practiced widely throughout the world… in North and South America, in Africa, Europe, Australia and Oceania.
  - However would we consider a Christian person from Venezuela the *same ethnic group* as a Christian person from Fiji?

- Many people practice the religion of Islam in the world, but would you consider a Muslim person from Saudi Arabia to be the *same ethnic group* as a Muslim person from the islands of Indonesia?
Look at the following questions and decide if the question relates to an ethnicity or religion.

- Karen and Sue both speak the French language. (ethnicity-language)
- On Sunday, the entire family attends a church service. (religion)
- Kamal and Jedda are both nomadic herders like their father. (ethnicity-ancestry)
- Two girls both have very blond hair, blue eyes and a very pale complexion. (ethnicity–physical appearance)
- Sameer celebrates the colorful holiday of Holi dedicated to the god Krishna (religion)
Try some more

- “I am Chinese.”  
  (ethnicity– nationality)
- Bowing in prayer toward Mecca as part of a daily prayers ritual.  
  (religion)
- Wearing a heavy alpaca poncho because my family and I live high in the Andes mountains.  
  (ethnicity – shared territory)
- I visited Japan and left a saw the notes left to the Kami spirits in the shrine.  
  (religion)
- We call ourselves Afrikaners because our forefathers came to South Africa from Europe to settle in a new land.  
  (ethnicity- history)
Sample CRCT Question

Which of these is an ethnic group?

a. Kurd
b. Muslim
c. Christian
d. Jordanian