To live a biblical lifestyle distinct from the world does not come from our own initiative; it is a call from God. Our aspirations and standards should not be determined by the world. So much of the Christian’s life is a paradox, a tension of polar opposites. There is the inner struggle for righteous desires, set against the outward consequences of being human that Paul bemoans (Rom. 7: 21–25). Trusting in Christ leaves us between a carnal world system and the glories of heaven. Separation does not cut us off in holy huddles, because Jesus Himself set the example as a friend of sinners whose testimony was spotless (Luke 7:34). True piety finds contentment in Christ as we “live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:12, NIV).

God deserves our best efforts in purity and single-minded devotion while being His change agents in a broken world (John 17:15), ‘a peculiar people’ observed critically by that world. Without demonstrating God’s better ways, our purpose as Jesus followers is in question. By putting first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we should expect opposition and even persecution when the two value systems collide. We have certain rights as citizens of our nations, but we have no rights as slaves of Christ. Too often we forget this: Living by the principles of God rather than the world’s is a costly choice. Our battle is not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12) so, when we face social or legal pressures, we should not use the world’s weapons of slander or violence but instead love our enemies for Christ’s sake. Against this there is no defense. To love the world the way that God does means seeing people made in His image worth redeeming.

Doing right is radical
In Lake Tanganyika (Tanzania), an OM worker sought to establish vibrant communities among the least reached, particularly the fishermen who live on the lake in sordid lifestyles. He fished with them and let his life testify to Christ. They were amazed: He loved his family, he was sober, he was honest to all; why this radical contrast? This is the kind of life all of us should exhibit with natural grace.

Those of us from peaceful, wealthy nations can mistake temporal blessings for God’s favour, subtly allowing earthly causes to overrule our allegiance to God alone. If we think that God has blessed us, what then of our brothers and sisters in South Sudan who love Jesus as much as we do or perhaps more? Has God blessed Singapore because of its Christians? Our neighbour Brunei has as much security and wealth, but no place for Jesus Christ. What then shall we say?

We can evaluate our thinking and actions in living a separated life in several ways:

- **Motivation:** What driving force or value is behind my views and behaviour? Can I still see the line between competing kingdoms? Do I allow a double standard to prevail? Am I swayed by money, power or reputation?
- **Method:** Jesus has called us to a better way. Am I ready to have Him examine my words and actions through an accountability partner/structure?
- **Measure:** Absolutes of right and wrong must prevail; everything said and done to exalt Christ needs no justification.

The Lord is impressed not by our attempts at piety, but with lives of consistent humility and putting His ways first. Our ultimate motive is not to witness to people but to imitate Him, even when only He sees.
MEXICO: SHARING WORLDS

While Logos Hope was in for maintenance, some crewmembers visited a remote people group in the mountains. The district of Orizaba has been visited by previous OM ship teams over the years, so it was special to see fruit from previous ministry such as a teenager who committed his life to Christ at an outreach fifteen years ago is now training to be a pastor.

A church leader let the ship team use his house. They were blessed with food and transport from the congregation as they spoke at school assemblies, shared the gospel door-to-door and informed the church about persecuted Christians around the world.

At a number of large-scale shows, Logos Hope’s international volunteers shared different cultural expressions but a common faith. More than 3,000 people attended these evenings and had opportunity to ask questions; several decided to follow Jesus.

Recalled John Hernandez (Aruba), “I’ve never known people unaware of other civilisations and countries, so we kept things simple. The indigenous Nahua people are very poor but had so much joy in offering whatever they had to us. It was amazing to see how active the church was. Working with them was tiring, but encouraged us all.”

“I struggled to keep meeting people,” said Steph Jemphrey (Northern Ireland). “But God gave me new capacity. I also learnt the simplicity of the gospel,” Steph said. “When you see the reaction of some, you know that it’s truth that people need. This experience helped me to share the gospel again.” She explained, “It not only brings joy to hearers; it brings you joy too, because you know that you are spreading light with eternal value.”

Pray for the church in Orizaba as its workers make an impact in this least-reached community.

GUATEMALA: JUST RESPOND

OM has started a relief project for people affected by the volcano eruption of June 3. As of June 12, the government reported 110 people killed, 197 missing, 57 injured and 5,074 in emergency shelters. This relief project will address the medium-term needs of people as urgent needs like food, water, clothing and shelter are being met by the local population and the government.

We will provide items such as beds, tables, chairs, stoves and washing sinks for those affected to restart their lives. The project should be completed by the end of July. The team is currently meeting with the people directly affected, local leaders, pastors, teachers and government officials. We plan to assist 50 families and are raising $20,000 USD but these numbers could change as we have greater understanding. Pray for fortitude and compassion for all those involved in the situation, and that lasting relationships will form that extend God’s kingdom.

BANGLADESH: HITTING BOTTOM

Since August 2017, OM’s partner organisation has sent teams once or twice a month to refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar where an estimated 700,000 Rohingya have fled violence in Myanmar. The army asked them for assistance in the distribution of food, soap and umbrellas for protection from the sweltering summer sun and coming monsoon rains to 1,000 families. Team members protected children from the sun, cut their nails, combed their hair, prayed silently over them and made them feel seen and loved.

“We’re aware that we can do little, but God calls us to do something,” shared programme coordinator Pastor Saul. “When we pray, ‘Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven,’ what do we pray? Is there hunger in heaven? Homelessness? No. If we as Christians pray this prayer, we also need to act. Prayer is not enough.”

OM’s partner wants a long-term presence in the camps and surrounding community. Sophia*, one of those establishing the office near Cox’s Bazar, joined the distribution efforts in April and felt the presence of hope in the camps but also much fear as monsoon season approaches.

“Everything they are building now might be destroyed in the coming weeks,” she said. Real fears exist that temporary shelters “will be demolished through the heavy rain and winds, roads will be inaccessible, families will be separated through landslides, latrines will overrun, access to drinking water will be cut, and diseases will spread.”

NGOs are distributing kits to make shelters as safe as possible and implementing plans for better drainage and an identification system for children in case they get separated from their families. Pray for OM’s partners as they seek permissions to work there. Please also pray for health and safety of the Rohingya people with the dangers the summer rains are expected to bring—and for them to know the love of the Father who sees them in the midst of the storm.

FRANCE: ORGANIC CHURCH

Martin and Petro Delange joined OM in 2012 to work among a large Turkish community with little exposure to the gospel. They now work among groups of Christian Turks in six towns. Martin recalls a recent experience sharing the Word of God with Turkish-speaking believers.

“Sometimes we ask ourselves if it is worth it. You work hard and long with little fruit. I pondered this as I followed Ahmet up to the fourth floor of a rundown apartment. It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, and we were
going to minister to a Bulgarian Turkish-speaking group.

David*, the leader, was filled with joy, as he told how everyone was waiting for us to share the Word of God. As we entered the apartment, we saw people sitting on the floor in the corridor, the kitchen, the adjacent room and the lounge—there were people everywhere. They were so excited to see us, after we had been away for a month. David whispered in my ear, “There are about 50 people here, and we have six new families that accepted Jesus as Saviour last month.” After I ministered the Word of God, they lined up for prayer and, for the next hour, Petro and I prayed for different needs. We left, four hours later, completely exhausted but so blessed and encouraged.

We then realised that God is at work in His own way, and Muslims are stepping into a relationship with Jesus like never before. It is worth it all.”

Pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to the Turks in France, and that He would strengthen leaders already in place. Pray, too, for the Delange family, as well as Alper Tetik, a Turkish Christian who recently joined OM.

IRELAND: A PARALLEL WORLD
When Ellianna (USA) sought an eight-month intercultural ministry internship for her university studies, she wanted to go to Austria to work with refugees. Yet two weeks before her departure, her visa was denied, meaning she would spend all of her internship with OM in Ireland. Settling into an admin role there, Ellianna struggled with this dramatic change of plans. Several months passed as she participated in street evangelism, on-site hospitality and school programmes—yet still not among refugees. Teammates had been visiting a hotel serving as a refugee centre once a week for several months; during a casual conversation, they invited Ellianna to go with them.

Ellianna shared, “I had no idea what to expect: In the middle of nowhere, there’s this hotel with 200 refugees—a Syrian world in the middle of Ireland.” The OMers visit the refugees without an agenda. Each week, they hang out, love the people they meet and pray that God gives opportunities to speak gospel truth. Now Ellianna has begun building her own relationships with the refugees.

“It’s been amazing to see how conversations have come up about Jesus and the gospel,” Ellianna marveled. “We often feel, as Christians, that after you meet someone, you have to share the gospel, but it was four months before I shared my faith with anyone. It’s been eye-opening to talk to people who have been through so much. There’s a whole other world out there that is suffering. To see that these are real people with real fears, joys, passions, it’s challenging to truly value these people for who they are.”

Through a handful of OMers simplyvaluing individuals in this displaced community, these refugees have had the opportunity to experience God’s love in ways they might never otherwise have done.

NEAR EAST: START HERE, NOW
A kids’ club for local Arab children and Syrian Muslim refugee children started at a local church with initially ten children. Within two months, it grew rapidly to 66. OM team member George* saw that a number of the children were illiterate and began teaching them. Some of the children encouraged their parents to go to the church despite the adults’ objections. “These are great people and they talk about Jesus the Messiah,” they said. A mother and her children were deeply touched by the teaching and outpouring of love they found at the church. Spurred on by what they were learning, they said, “We want to follow Jesus.” Some 21 are preparing for their baptism.

The DBS (Discipleship Bible Study) programme is taking off with six groups of Arabs participating in one location. Many other DBS groups are springing up elsewhere in the Near East (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq).

Meanwhile, the eighth training of local university students is underway, teaching participants how to effectively answer common questions Muslims have about Jesus, how to share their Christian faith with Muslim friends and ways to pray with them. “So many of my dear friends are Muslims. I love them. But every time I tried to speak about Jesus, I felt stuck,” one student said of her experience before the training. “As the course finished, I found I could speak confidently with Muslim friends,” she said. “In fact, I had the opportunity to pray with more than 20 Muslim women so far who were sad, sick or simply needed some encouragement. I am so excited!”

A project translating the Jesus film into Arabic sign language recently wrapped up. Stay tuned for its release and distribution.

Thank you for your prayers and support of all OM ministries worldwide.

* name changed
The way I see it

GETTING BACK TO BASICS • BY BEN

The more I look at biblical examples of ministry, the more I see a simple yet profoundly flexible grassroots approach to ministry that compels me to focus on things that really matter.

PRAY
All great people of God pray. If God is the one who changes hearts and communities, then asking God to help in mission is our utmost priority. Let’s take every opportunity to pray for individuals and intercede for communities because prayer unleashes God’s power. It also moves lost people and God’s mission from our mind into our heart.

CONNECT
God is a relational God, and so ministry works through relationships. Mobilizing near-culture believers to go and connect with unreached people is key. Face-to-face contact builds relationship, and living amongst the communities we are trying to reach maximizes this. Our daily life can shine Christ through word and action.

SHARE
Jesus is the only hope for a broken and lost world. It’s clear that people must know of Jesus and what He has done for them to be saved (Acts 4:12). While our mission should seek to be holistic, we mustn’t forget to actually share the gospel. We share, and God transforms. So, let’s do our best to train and mobilise local believers to share the gospel amongst their own people and beyond, in ways that lead to multiplication. No fancy programs—just wide sowing amongst remaining people groups in a way they understand.

TRAIN
Jesus commanded us to make disciples defined by active obedience (Matt. 28:18–20). As God’s Word is the primary way God reveals Himself and His purpose for us, all discipleship efforts should centre around the Bible. Believers need the opportunity to listen, discuss, and understand God’s Word, and a way to respond with accountability. This helps move God’s word from the pages in our Bibles, to our heads, hearts and hands. The idea is not to teach new believers everything they need to know, but rather obedience to what they know. I believe the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) approach is effective, adaptable and flexible enough to suit most groups and cultures. It’s also easily reproducible leading to multiplication, because everyone can be commissioned and mobilised to minister. Our aim should be to train and mobilise Spirit-filled disciples motivated by love and equipped with the necessary skills.

GATHER
I’ve learnt that gathering believers is key because communities are rarely transformed by an individual, and individuals struggle to shine without fellowship. Allow the Bible to define ‘church’ (Acts 2), and work to keep it indigenous, and locally ‘owned and operated.’ Where there are no believers, starting with a household of peace can be a bridge into the community. If they believe, these households already have numbers, influence and a place to gather for regular fellowship and discipling, and therefore can quickly and naturally become Jesus’ communities. Our aim is to create loving vibrant communities with local leadership who gather to worship, pray, train, celebrate the Lord’s Supper and practice baptism, in order to obediently give, serve, and tell, so they will multiply and impact! Let’s build and help these communities be all they were made to be, and do all they were created for.

MULTIPLY
As a leader and follower I see that, without committed local leadership, the church will simply not fulfil God’s purpose and multiply. Let’s work to raise faithful leaders with God’s vision and heart who are rooted in His Word. Let’s spend extra time to help them understand key truths, and to pass on the authority given to us. God will provide the leaders, but we need to be prepared to walk with them.

(Author’s bio) Ben serves in South Asia along with his wife and five children. He has a passion for evangelism and discipleship and enjoys sport, riding motorbikes, trekking in the mountains and working with his hands. He also loves to spend time with his family and reading to build his faith.