

## **Christian Flourishing as Social Holiness: A Wesleyan Framework for Integral Mission**

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### **Abstract**

This article explores Christian flourishing through the lens of Wesleyan social holiness and integral mission. Based on qualitative interviews with Filipino and Korean Christian participants, the study examines how flourishing is shaped by culture, church life, and communal faith practices. The findings suggest that Christian flourishing is best understood not as private spirituality alone, but as a communal and relational reality formed through worship, discipleship, fellowship, and shared responsibility. The article argues that Wesleyan social holiness provides a robust theological framework for understanding flourishing as a holistic expression of Christian life. In conversation with integral mission, understood as the lordship of Jesus Christ (Lausanne Movement 2026), the study highlights the inseparability of spiritual formation, Christian witness, and practical concern for others.

Keywords: Christian flourishing, social holiness, Wesleyan theology, integral mission, qualitative research

### **Introduction**

Christian flourishing is often discussed in terms of personal spirituality, moral formation, or inner well-being. While these dimensions are important, such an understanding can become overly individualistic when detached from the communal and relational realities of the Christian life (VanderWeele 2024; Perkins 2021). In practice, faith is shaped not only by private devotion but also by church life, cultural context, shared practices, and the relationships that form Christian identity (Watson 2014; Marquardt

1992).

This article explores Christian flourishing through the experiences of Filipino and Korean Christian participants from Nazarene, Presbyterian, and Methodist traditions. It seeks to understand how they describe flourishing in relation to faith, church community, and cultural context. Rather than treating flourishing as a private spiritual condition alone, the study argues that it is formed through communal life and lived Christian witness. In this sense, the article engages Wesleyan social holiness as a theological framework for interpreting the findings. Wesleyan social holiness emphasizes that holiness is not merely individual or inward, but lived out in relationship with others through love, accountability, and practical responsibility (Watson 2014; Pedlard 2011).

The study further suggests that this understanding of Christian flourishing resonates with integral mission. Lausanne Movement (2026) defines integral mission as bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, while refusing a dichotomy between evangelistic and social responsibility. By contrast, World Vision International (n.d.) presents integral mission as a holistic commitment that holds together witness, justice, and human transformation. By placing Christian flourishing in conversation with Wesleyan social holiness and integral mission, this article contributes to theological reflection on how Christian life is experienced, formed, and expressed within the church and in the world. This article asks: How do Christians understand flourishing in relation to their faith community, and how does Wesleyan social holiness help interpret that understanding?

### **Literature Review**

Christian flourishing has increasingly been discussed in relation to well-being, meaning, virtue, and spiritual formation (VanderWeele 2024; Perkins 2021). However, recent work also shows that flourishing is not simply an individual condition but is deeply connected to communal participation and shared religious life (DeSilva 2008; Marshall 2018).

Studies of religious communities suggest that flourishing is often strengthened through religious practices rather than private spirituality alone. Christian flourishing should therefore be understood not merely as an inward state, but as something shaped through participation in the life of the church.

Within Wesleyan theology, this communal dimension is especially important because holiness is fundamentally social (Marquardt 1992; Watson 2014). Wesley's concept of social holiness emphasizes that holy love requires others for its cultivation and that Christian growth occurs in community rather than isolation (Pedlar 2011; Manskar 2015). Sanctification is not only about personal moral improvement but also about relationships, accountability, service, and the church's shared practices (Highfield 2023). Social holiness thus provides a theological framework for understanding Christian flourishing as relational and communal.

The literature on integral mission further strengthens this perspective by insisting that Christian witness cannot be divided into spiritual and social categories (Lausanne Movement 2026; World Vision International, n.d.). Lausanne Movement (2026) defines integral mission as the task of bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and World Vision International (n.d.) similarly frames it as a holistic commitment to spiritual witness and social transformation. This approach resists dualism and argues that the mission of the church embraces the totality of life. Integral mission, therefore, offers a useful lens for interpreting Christian flourishing as a holistic expression of Christian life and witness.

Taken together, this body of literature points toward a more integrated understanding of Christian flourishing. However, there remains room for a study that brings them together through the lived experiences of Filipino and Korean Christians in a Wesleyan-Holiness context. This article addresses that gap by examining how participants describe flourishing in relation to church life, culture, and Christian responsibility, and by interpreting those descriptions through the lenses of Wesleyan social holiness and integral mission.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how participants understand and experience Christian flourishing in their own words. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to examine meaning, interpretation, and lived experience rather than measure predetermined variables. The research focused on Filipino and Korean Christian participants from Nazarene, Presbyterian, and Methodist backgrounds.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This method allowed participants to speak freely about their understanding of Christian flourishing, the influence of church life, and the role of culture in shaping their faith experience. The interview format also made it possible to probe more deeply into themes that emerged during conversation, especially those related to community, discipleship, worship, service, and responsibility.

The interview data were analyzed thematically. This involved identifying recurring ideas, comparing responses across participants, and grouping related meanings into broader themes. The analysis focused on patterns that illuminated how participants understood flourishing as a lived Christian reality. Particular attention was given to themes that connected personal faith with communal life, cultural formation, and expressions of Christian witness. This methodological approach was chosen because it allowed the study to remain close to participants' voices while also supporting theological interpretation. The findings were then read in conversation with Wesleyan social holiness and integral mission in order to identify their theological significance (Squire et al., 2024).

## **Findings**

The analysis of the interview data revealed several recurring themes that help explain how participants understood Christian flourishing. Across the interviews, flourishing was consistently described as a communal, relational, and faith-shaped reality rather than a merely private spiritual

condition. Participants repeatedly connected flourishing with church life, worship, discipleship, fellowship, and responsibility toward others. These themes show that flourishing was understood not simply as personal well-being, but as a lived expression of Christian belonging and witness.

### **Christian Flourishing is Communal**

One of the clearest findings was that participants associated flourishing with life in Christian community. They described the church as a place where faith is nurtured, supported, and made visible through shared practices and mutual care. Flourishing was not framed as something achieved alone, but as something experienced through belonging, accountability, and participation in the life of the church. This suggests that Christian flourishing is deeply social and relational in character, resonating with the themes of bayanihan and belonging in Filipino religious life (Adlit & Martinez 2023; Marshall 2018).

### **Culture Shapes Understanding**

A second finding was that culture influenced how participants described and experienced flourishing. Filipino and Korean participants emphasized different dimensions of faith, community, and responsibility, yet both groups located flourishing within a relational framework shaped by their cultural backgrounds. Rather than weakening the findings, these differences showed that Christian flourishing is expressed through culturally shaped forms of discipleship and communal life.

### **Flourishing Includes Witness**

A third finding was that flourishing involved both inward spiritual growth and outward Christian witness. Participants connected flourishing with worship, service, care for others, and faithful participation in the church's mission. In their accounts, flourishing was not limited to personal devotion or emotional well-being. It also included visible acts of love, practical

responsibility, and commitment to the body of Christ.

### **Faith is Holistic**

Taken together, the findings suggest that Christian flourishing is best understood as a holistic reality. Participants did not separate spiritual formation from communal responsibility or personal growth from church participation. Instead, they described a way of life in which faith, relationships, and Christian action belong together. This holistic pattern provides the basis for the theological interpretation developed in the next section.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study support a Wesleyan understanding of Christian life as fundamentally communal and relational (Marquardt 1992; Watson 2014). Participants consistently described flourishing in connection with church life, mutual care, worship, discipleship, and responsibility toward others. This pattern aligns closely with Wesley's concept of social holiness, which insists that holiness is not a private achievement but a shared way of life formed in Christian community (Pedlar 2011; Manskar, 2015). Wesley's vision of holiness is rooted in the love of God and neighbor and is sustained through practices of accountability, fellowship, and mutual encouragement (Highfield 2023). In this sense, the findings show that Christian flourishing is best understood not as isolated spirituality, but as holiness lived socially.

This interpretation is significant because it moves Christian flourishing beyond an individualistic frame. Rather than treating flourishing as only inward peace, personal piety, or private devotion, the participants described a faith that is embodied in relationships and visible in the life of the church. Their accounts suggest that Christian formation happens through belonging, shared practices, and active participation in the community of faith. This strongly reflects Wesley's insistence that there is no holiness but social holiness (Watson 2014; Manskar 2015).

The findings also resonate with integral mission. Lausanne Movement (2026) frames integral mission as the task of bringing the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, while World Vision International (n.d.) underscores the unity of spiritual witness and social transformation. The participants' descriptions of flourishing as involving worship, service, care, and communal responsibility show that the Christian life is already being experienced in this integrated way. Their understanding of flourishing, therefore, supports a holistic vision of mission in which spiritual formation and practical witness are inseparable.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Christian flourishing is not only a theological idea but also a lived communal reality. The study contributes to a Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of Christian life by showing that flourishing is formed through shared practices of faith and expressed through Christian responsibility. It also contributes to conversations on integral mission by showing that a holistic vision of mission is not merely a theoretical ideal but is reflected in the experiences of believers across cultural contexts. This makes the study relevant not only to theology but also to the church's understanding of discipleship, community, and witness.

### **Conclusion**

This article has argued that Christian flourishing is best understood as a communal and relational reality shaped by Wesleyan social holiness (Marquardt 1992; Watson 2014). Drawing from qualitative interviews with Filipino and Korean Christian participants, the study found that flourishing is experienced through church life, worship, discipleship, fellowship, and responsibility toward others. These findings suggest that Christian flourishing is not merely a matter of private spirituality but a holistic expression of faith formed in community.

The study also showed that Wesleyan social holiness provides a valuable theological framework for interpreting these findings (Highfield 2023; Pedlar 2011). In Wesleyan thought, holiness is not isolated or

individualistic; it is lived socially in love of God and neighbor, mutual accountability, and Christian witness. This framework helps explain why participants consistently connected flourishing with communal life and practical expressions of faith. In addition, the study's findings resonate with the integral mission articulated by the Lausanne Movement (2026) and World Vision International (n.d.), showing that proclamation, discipleship, compassion, and service belong together in the Christian life and witness.

The contribution of this article is therefore twofold. First, it offers a theological interpretation of Christian flourishing rooted in Wesleyan social holiness. Second, it shows that this interpretation supports a holistic understanding of mission in which spiritual formation and practical responsibility are inseparable. Future research could explore this framework in other cultural or denominational settings or examine how churches can more intentionally cultivate communal forms of flourishing in ministry and discipleship.

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