

Recently, we reported on Sweetwater's first field sampling effort on Walnut Creek Hunting Club pond. It is reasonable to ask what stabbing the muck of a pond with a survey rod has to do with the Great Commission. It is also reasonable to question the effectiveness of discipleship in settings where water is filthy, food is scarce, and disease is rampant.

Sweetwater aims to enhance the effectiveness of Christ-honoring work around the world by helping ministries get from A to C where B is a water hurdle. In many places, water is the proverbial mountain Jesus spoke of in Matthew 17:20. Consider a ministry that intends to establish a Bible school in a community where water is abundant but polluted with human waste. The building for the school may be constructed by short-term mission teams, the books provided by seminaries, and teachers with a heart for missions might raise 4-years of support from their home church. However, when the doors of the school open, only half of the students show up because the other half are too weak to attend due to water borne illness. How can children drained of energy by amoebic dysentery be expected to appropriate the Christian discipleship being offered by skilled, selfless, well-intentioned educators? Perhaps a simpler example is this: when a missionary intends to carry the Gospel overseas, he hires an airline to take him to his destination. Water is an obstacle that the missionary must cross with the aid of a person trained in the technical skill of flying a plane in order to more effectively reach people with the good news of Jesus Christ.



Sweetwater recently started a pond restoration project in Proctor, Texas. Our starting point "A" is a community of drug and alcohol addicts and a man with a heart to reach them for Christ. Our endpoint "C" is a community of saved, restored, thriving-in-Jesus disciples who are fruitful witnesses for Christ. In between A and C is an obstacle, "B", which is "where can this discipleship take place?" Mr. Landon Northcutt wants to build a pond-side hunting lodge on his property as a staging area for discipleship. However, Walnut Creek Pond is overripe with manure, the plant and animal populations are not diverse, and the pond ecology is vulnerable to collapse if it is hit by severe drought, flood, or other disturbances. Mr. Northcutt has a heart to disciple men and women trapped in addiction (A) and wants to use his land as a staging area for that discipleship (C) but pond ecology is an obstacle (B). Mr. Northcutt has hired Sweetwater to get his ministry from A to C by overcoming B.

A key part of restoring the pond is developing a healthy, thriving fish population. Some fish prefer deep water, some prefer shallow water. Some need muddy substrate for feeding and nesting, whereas others need gravel and sand. The depth readings we recorded in January, 2019, will show where dredging might be necessary to deepen areas that are too shallow. Knowing the contours of the pond bowl will also inform where we install rooted aquatic plants such as cattails and reeds. These will serve as shelter for fish as well as habitat for the bugs that the fish eat.

Our activities on Walnut Creek Pond, which appear several degrees disconnected from direct Gospel outreach, are, in fact, critical components of Sweetwater's discipleship ministry. The blessings to Abraham and us, his inheritors by adoption through Christ, were land, seed, and blessing (Genesis 17:3-8). A place is required as a staging area to experience fruitfulness and blessing. Eden was the place where Adam and Eve enjoyed the presence of God; the New Earth will be where we once again enjoy the presence of God unimpeded. God imbued nature with a print of His invisible attributes (Rom 1:20; Psalm 19:1; et al.). When Sweetwater nurtures nature to be beautiful and fruitful, we are enabling

creation to display a sharper image of the Creator. We are focusing the lens of nature's projector. Weary souls will one day come to Walnut Creek and be disarmed by the beauty and peace of the place. Some of our readers will be familiar with [L'Abri](#), a Christian ministry started by Dr. Francis Shaeffer and his wife, Edith, in 1955. The Schaeffers intended to create a place where weary souls could rest a while and learn in peaceful surroundings about Jesus Christ, the Answer to their questions. Sweetwater is working to create an outdoor setting for similar purposes on Walnut Creek Pond.

Several additional blessings and discipleship opportunities spring from our scientific endeavors on the pond. When we test the water chemistry, we plan to use two different methods: one conventional and one unconventional. The conventional method will be the standard tests used in industrialized nations that can afford expensive labs and high-tech equipment. The unconventional method will rely on inexpensive, readily-available tools derived from natural resources. This is referred to as "appropriate technology" (AT) when local, reasonably-attainable resources are used to engineer solutions. We will test the accuracy and precision of our AT method against standard methods to see if we can obtain similar results. If successful, then we can use the AT in places where labs are nonexistent and money is scarce. Thus, not only will our work on Walnut Creek Pond facilitate Mr. Northcutt's mission, it will give Sweetwater the opportunity to develop tools that can be used to bring clean water to widows and orphans in impoverished, technology-poor communities around the world. Furthermore, we intend to publish the results of our tests in peer-reviewed scientific journals. This will open doors for the Gospel in the dark world of scientific academia where atheism rules. I spent 15 years as a researcher at secular institutions and mourn for my colleagues who study the stars with their eyes closed. Taking measurements on a 3-acre pond in a small Texas town is a strategic step towards reaching my ivory tower colleagues with Jesus Christ. Finally, the field work and analysis cannot be accomplished without a team of volunteers and interns. Ms. Angela Jackson (current intern), and Farron Fiedler (fish intern, summer 2019), and even my own sons are being trained to use their science skills for the advancement of the Gospel. Fieldwork is a stage for discipleship of up and coming scientists who will deliver the water of Jesus Christ.



In summary, rigorous examination of pond depth, water chemistry, and fish habitat, is intended to focus what is currently a blurry picture of God's beauty, rest (shalom), and fruitfulness. We are creating a place for people whom God is saving to experience his blessings. The results of our work will aid future efforts in nonindustrial societies by creating novel tools for water restoration. The lessons learned will also be disseminated to the larger science community in a manner that points to God as the Author of the beauty and rest that He accomplished through our trained hands.

Sweetwater's mission is to design and support holistic water strategies and education to improve the effectiveness of water projects around the world in Gospel-centered ministry. Our target clientele are the widow, the orphan, and the poor*, but we also intend our work to be a blessing to young Christians and a light to scientists who have chosen to worship the creation rather than the Creator. Dropping our survey rod into Walnut Creek Pond was one more step towards fulfilling all facets of Sweetwater's mission.

**Defined not simply in monetary terms. Poverty manifests in diverse forms, including spiritual, educational, and governmental.*

Those who have invested in Sweetwater are already seeing their investment bear fruit in the lives of our interns and volunteers. When you give to Sweetwater of the resources God has given you, you are impacting the lives of a diverse group of interns, widows, orphans, drug addicts, and atheist scientists. We are working hard to establish a base of recurring donors. Please consider committing a little each month to Sweetwater and follow our bulletins and social media posts to watch the buds turn into blossoms and the blossoms turn into fruit. Go to www.SweetwaterResearch.org/Donate for more details.

I want to thank Hurvey and Dorothy Woodson for their email that prompted this essay. Their enquiries prodded me to clarify in detail how Sweetwater connects the dots between scientific exploration, pond life, and discipleship. The Woodsons have been my mission mentors for over 30 years. I am so grateful for their faithful care and counsel.

Soli Deo Gloria,



David Pendergrass

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