



WOW: Word Of the Week

Swamp

October 15, 2025

I get older, I reminisce. I see lessons I had not noticed.

For Jan and me, Michigan one of our “happy places.” We have special memories. Fall, copper leaves, a last canoe trip of the season. I remember the rivers we canoed— the Chippewa, the Thornapple. Both flowed rapidly enough to require little effort. Birds, wildlife, foliage, lazy days of summer and colorful fall excursions.

Michigan memories—the first home we owned. The house that Bob and Jan built—48 years ago! Time flies. We bought and improved the property, then built a home we had designed. The house sat on ten acres; about half of that land was forested wetlands—otherwise known as swamp. Our swamp froze over in winter, was full of water during spring thaw, still had enough water to generate giant mosquitos in summer, and was a delight to walk and enjoy about eight months of the year. It dried up in the summer, filled with fall rains and winter snow, thawed about March-April. Many of the trees in our forested wetland were hard maples—gloriously beautiful in fall. The eight months should outweigh the four months, right? But our family talks more about our swamp than about our forest.

Rivers and swamps. Churches are usually one or the other! So are people. Are you a river? Are you a swamp? I am heading toward a spiritual truth.

The Michigan rivers we enjoyed canoeing had a current strong enough to carry us downstream. You could say that they had **direction**. They were narrow enough and deep enough to keep the water flowing. When a river narrows, the current is stronger and faster. When a river gets wider, it gets shallower. It loses momentum—perhaps okay for leisurely canoeing but not very good for going anywhere. And you will likely have to paddle!

Now! If a river gets too wide, it barely flows. In Louisiana it may become a delta, but in the world of Michigan peat bogs, it became a swamp (excuse me, forested wetland!). A swamp is not going anywhere! A swamp collects water, usually with no outlet. The water is **shallow** and may **stagnate**.

Spiritual application time. Personal. (We will talk about churches another time!) Are you a river or a swamp? Are you going somewhere? Anyone going anywhere? (Hitchhiker, heading one way before lunch and the other way after lunch.)

Do you know your God-given purpose? Stay focused on your life purpose. Avoid the tendency to attempt everything. Excel. Move forward. Toward God. Seek depth over width. Flow deep. Do not stagnate. Too often, we try to please God by doing everything. We lose power, we become less forceful, we lose direction, we are going nowhere fast. We value width over depth. We lose sight of our true mission.

I share a quote from a newsletter I recently received. John Wesley said, “*You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work.*” Keep the main thing the main thing. How much of our activity makes little difference eternally? Let us devote our efforts to the main thing. Let us find spiritual depth to sustain our hearts for God’s saving purpose in this world—bringing more and more people to Jesus. God, move me forward, a river and not a swamp, like a river flowing strong and steady toward my God-given purpose and destiny.