

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Let the WORD penetrate your heart”
(Part III of “Awakened to Grace”)
June 7, 2026

Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Hebrews 4:12

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (05/24/2026) Grace saves us from the guilt and power of sin
- (05/31/2026) When we pray, we 1) receive God’s grace and 2) invite God to intervene.

Core theological idea: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (The Holy Spirit) to penetrate our hearts with the wisdom of Jesus to create space for God’s grace.

Challenge/purpose: To encourage people to prayerfully study Scripture.

The Sermon

There are times in our lives when we need to create space. A week and a half from now, when we move, the professional movers will need to create space in the big truck so there will be enough room to fit everything. Sometimes, we need to create space from our spouses, romantic partners or good friends to keep the relationship alive. When talking to another person, especially someone we just met, we might take a step back to maintain our personal space.

Well, our Savior & Lord, Jesus, creates space in our hearts. You see, we all have some type of trash, such as anger, hatred, prejudice, greed, lust, racism, sexism, or other nasty attitudes that take up space in our hearts. This trash leaves no room for God’s grace. (Remember, God’s grace is the unconditional love of God that the Holy Spirit makes known to us. This grace changes our hearts, so we become holy & loving like Jesus.) So, Jesus creates space in our hearts for God’s grace. As grace takes up residence in our hearts, it pushes out the trash. For Jesus to create space in our hearts, he must penetrate our hearts with his wisdom, and he often does this through prayerful Bible study. So, we can say: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s grace. Let me say this again: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s grace.

We see this happening in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul

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and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”
Let’s break this down.

- For the Word of God is alive and active...
 - According to John 1:1-18, The WORD of God is Jesus.
 - The Bible is the Written Word of God.
 - The Holy Spirit uses the Written Word of God to bring us to Jesus.
- Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;
 - The WORD of God penetrates our hearts, souls, and minds.
 - The WORD of God does this through prayerful Bible study (There are other means through which the WORD of God does this, but prayerful Bible study is one of the primary means)
- it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
 - The WORD of God will let us know what needs changing and what needs to remain the same inside our hearts.
 - By doing this, the Word of God (Jesus) creates space for God’s grace.

Thus, we can say: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s transforming grace. So, we must read the Bible expecting Jesus to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom. There are four Bible study approaches that will help us to do this. They are: 1) Study Scripture through the eyes of Jesus, 2) Look at the whole Bible as one story, 3) Find the threads running through the Biblical story, and 4) Consider God’s Creative intent.

I could spend an hour talking about each of these approaches, but I know you are looking forward to a great lunch, so I will not do that. In your bulletin is a handout explaining all four of these approaches. For now, I will briefly explain two of the approaches.

The first approach I will talk about is studying Scripture through the eyes of Jesus. We believe that Jesus is fully human and fully God. As such, Jesus is the greatest revelation of God’s character. If you want to know God’s character, look at the life and teachings of Jesus. For this reason, when we interpret a passage of Scripture, we should ask, “Does this interpretation align with God’s character as revealed by Jesus?” By asking this question, we will never use the Written Word of God to justify hatred, oppression, or violence. Yes, there are many examples of hatred, oppression, and violence in the Bible but that doesn’t mean

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the Bible endorses such attitudes and behaviors because the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ would not endorse such things.

The second approach is finding the threads that run through the Bible. Since the Bible is one story, beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation, we should find threads running through the Biblical story. By thread, I mean a recurring theological truth or attitude found throughout the Bible that God wants us to embrace. There are numerous examples of violence and oppression running throughout the Bible, but they are not threads because God does not want us to embrace that.

The threads that I most easily see are: The sovereignty of God, love, and justice. The sovereignty of God is a thread because it is a recurring theological truth that God wants us to embrace. Love is also a thread because it occurs throughout the Bible and God wants us to love everyone. And justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people runs through the entire Bible and God wants us to embrace it.

The threads I easily find may not be the same threads you find. You might identify God’s grace, the nearness of God or the righteous community as threads. If we took the time, we could come up with many threads that make up the fabric of Scripture. This is why we practice both personal and group Bible studies.

The prayerful reading of the Bible is one of the primary ways through which Jesus penetrates our hearts with his wisdom to make room for God’s grace. If you are not already prayerfully and consistently reading the Bible, what are you waiting for?

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Outline

- I. There are times in our lives when we need to create space.
 - A. A week and a half from now, when we move, the professional movers will need to create space in the big truck so there will be enough room to fit everything.
 - B. Sometimes, we need to create space from our spouses, romantic partners or good friends to keep the relationship alive.
 - C. When talking to another person, especially someone we just met, we might take a step back to maintain our personal space.
- II. Well, our Savior & Lord, Jesus, creates space in our hearts.
 - A. You see, we all have some type of trash, such as anger, hatred, prejudice, greed, lust, racism, sexism, or other nasty attitudes that take up space in our hearts.
 - This trash leaves no room for God’s grace.
 - (Remember, God’s grace is the unconditional love of God that is made known to us by the Holy Spirit. This grace changes our hearts, so we become holy & loving like Jesus.)
 - B. So, Jesus creates space in our hearts for God’s grace.
 - As grace takes up residence in our hearts, it pushes out the trash.
 - C. For Jesus to create space in our hearts, he must penetrate our hearts with his wisdom, and he often does this through prayerful Bible study.
 - D. So, we can say: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s grace.
 - Let me say this again: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s grace.

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III. We see this happening in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Let’s break this down.

A. For the Word of God is alive and active...

- According to John 1:1-18, The WORD of God is Jesus.
- The Bible is the Written Word of God.
- The Holy Spirit uses the Written Word of God to bring us to Jesus.

B. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;

- The WORD of God penetrates our hearts, souls, and minds.
- The WORD of God does this through prayerful Bible study (There are other means through which the WORD of God does this, but prayerful Bible study is one of the primary means)

C. it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

- The WORD of God will let us know what needs changing and what needs to remain the same inside our hearts.
- By doing this, the Word of God (Jesus) creates space for God’s grace.

IV. Thus, we can say: Through prayerful Bible study, we invite the WORD (Jesus) to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom to create space for God’s transforming grace.

A. So, we must read the Bible expecting Jesus to penetrate our hearts with his wisdom.

B. There are four Bible study approaches that will help us to do this. They are:

- 1) Study Scripture through the eyes of Jesus,
- 2) The whole Bible as one story,

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- 3) The threads running through the Biblical story,
and
 - 4) God’s Creative intent.
- C. I could spend an hour talking about each of these approaches, but I know you are looking forward to a great lunch, so I will not do that.
- In your bulletin is a handout explaining all four of these approaches.
 - For now, I will briefly explain two of the approaches.
- V. The first approach I will talk about is studying Scripture through the eyes of Jesus.
- A. We believe that Jesus is fully human and fully God.
- B. As such, Jesus is the greatest revelation of God’s character.
- If you want to know God’s character, look at the life and teachings of Jesus.
- C. For this reason, when we interpret a passage of Scripture, we should ask, “Does this interpretation align with God’s character as revealed by Jesus?”
- By asking this question, we will never use the Written Word of God to justify hatred, oppression, or violence.
 - Yes, there are many examples of hatred, oppression, and violence in the Bible but that doesn’t mean the Bible endorses such attitudes and behaviors because the God revealed by Jesus would not endorse such things.
- VI. The second approach is looking at the threads that run through the Bible.
- A. Since the Bible is one story, beginning in Genesis and ending in Revelation, we should find threads running through the Biblical story.
- B. By thread, I mean a recurring theological truth or attitude found throughout the Bible that God wants us to embrace.

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- There are many examples of violence and oppression running throughout the Bible, but they are not threads because God does not want us to embrace that.
- The sovereignty of God, however, is a thread because it is a recurring theological truth that God wants us to embrace.
- Love is a thread because it occurs throughout the Bible and God wants us to love everyone.
- The last example is justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people. This concept runs through the entire Bible and God wants us to embrace it.
- If we took the time, we could come up with many more threads that make up the fabric of Scripture.

VII. The prayerful reading of the Bible is one of the primary ways through which Jesus penetrates our hearts with his wisdom to make room for God’s grace.

A. If you are not already prayerfully and consistently reading the Bible, what are you waiting for?