

sins. In this passage Jesus demonstrates his authority over darkness and validates his claim to be the Son of God. Now, reread the passage and think of it in the since of community. Is this not a beautiful image of what community is mean to be? A group of friends fighting through the crowds, breaking through walls or barriers that were holding their friend back from experiencing Jesus. The friends knew the only thing that could help the paralyzed man was Jesus. And they acted on his behalf to help bring him to Jesus. Do you have people around you that need help coming to Jesus? What obstacles stand in your friends' way of deliverance? How can you help them?

Thursday, April 18 – Read **Colossians 3:1-17** – Unity in the body of Christ is essential. Just think about a family. No one wants their kids to be divided or angry at each other. It is the same with the body of Christ. We are all sons and daughters in the Kingdom. Just as a father wants his family to work together so does God want us to all work together in the body of Christ. It brings great joy to our earthly fathers and to our heavenly father when we live in harmony with one another. Reread verse 14. "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony." So often we can get hung up with minor differences between us and other believers. Is there someone or a group of people in your life that have been hard to live in harmony with? How is God calling you to mend those relationships? Take time today to pray for those people in your life and ask God to help give you the strength and boldness to forgive them.

- "Put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint ..., forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." Paul says this type of loving takes action, like putting on clothes. What do you need to clothe yourself with today?

Friday, April 19 – Read **Matthew 22:34-40** – In this passage the Pharisees and Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus into saying something that they could imprison him with. The Pharisees highly regarded over 600 laws that one should live by. Jesus turned their question on them from what is the greatest thing that you can't do to the greatest thing that you can do. Love. Take time today and journal about this passage. What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind? What does it look like for you to love your neighbor as yourself?

- Before we can love others, we must be able to receive the love of the Lord for ourselves. Sometimes we jump the gun and spend all the time in the world loving others while spiritually draining ourselves. We must spend time refueling our love tanks. If we don't spend time receiving God's love and loving God, we will burn out and become spiritually dry. That is why he said the first and greatest commandment is to love God with all that you have.

Saturday, April 20 – Read **Ephesians 4** – The book of Ephesians is written by Paul to help encourage a community of believers in Ephesus. In this chapter, he focuses on unity in the body of Christ. He emphasizes being humble, patient, forgiving towards one another. It can take a lifetime to learn how to work well with others. Yet when we can surrender our pride and work humbly with others God can do amazing things. Spend some time in prayer and ask God to help you work well with others. What can you surrender today that would allow you to better love and work with others?

- Reread Ephesians 4:15-16 – He makes the entire body fit together perfectly! We each have a role in the body of Christ. As each of us do our role in participating in community, he uses us to help other parts grow. How does God use you to encourage others? What are ways you could invest more in community to better build up and strengthen others?

Family Activity: Get out a puzzle together and plan a time during your week to put together a puzzle with your family. Explain to your children that you will be putting together a puzzle. Now, give each member of your family a portion of the puzzle pieces. Next, tell everyone to split up and try to complete the puzzle in different parts of the room. They won't be able to. Now, bring the family back together and work as a team to put together puzzle. Use this opportunity to share with them the importance of community in the church. We all have pieces to the puzzle that will help everyone else complete the puzzle. None of us can complete the puzzle alone or without the help of a family member. It is the same in the body of Christ. We need each other's help. When we can work together in harmony and love towards one another we can do amazing things for Christ!