Growing up in Christ is a team sport. Individualism stunts growth, and inhibits maturity (p112). While we hold to individualistic ideals, we are not able to embrace church. “Individualism severely handicaps us in growing up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. If unchecked, it can be fatal, condemning us to lifelong immaturity” (p113). Instead of focussing on ourselves, we should focus on Christ; it is He that we are growing up into. “We are too full of ourselves. It is Christ – not me, not you, not us – who ‘fills all in all’” (p113).

The creation of church is not something that we do. Peterson highlights how Paul shows that the church is primarily the activity of God through the Spirit. “God and Jesus are the subject of nine active verbs that tell us what is going on in church: Jesus is our peace (Eph. 2:14), he made us one (v.14), he broke down the dividing wall of hostility (v.14), he abolished the law (v. 15), he created one new humanity (v. 15), he made peace (v. 15), he reconciled (v. 16), he put to death (v. 16), he proclaimed peace (v. 17)” (p117). In as much as we are involved in these actions, it is as actions done to us. There are five passive verbs regarding how we are involved in the action “we are brought near (v. 13), the Spirit gives us access (v. 18), we are built upon the foundation (v. 20), we are joined together (v. 21), we are built together (v. 22)... We acquire our identity not by what we do but by what is done to us” (p117).

Church can no more be understood functionally, than Jesus can be understood functionally. “We have to submit ourselves to the revelation and receive church as the gift of Christ as he embodies himself in this world” (p118). Church has to be understood ontologically (for what it is), rather than for what it does. “And what it is is far wider, deeper, higher than anything it does, or anything we can take charge of or manipulate” (p118-9). The central reality of church is the person of Jesus. “Jesus brings us home, Jesus brings us together, Jesus breaks down hostility, Jesus re-creates us as a unified humanity, Jesus reconciles all of us to God. Peace is complex and many-layered. A lot of action goes into making peace – and Jesus is the action” (p124).

Peace doesn’t come into being by fiat. It requires participation in the ways of peace, participation in Jesus who is our peace” (p124). Secondly, Jesus respects us as people. He does not force himself upon us. “He does not impose peace. He does not coerce... All of us are participants in peace. Jesus is at work bringing us, all that is us - our eternal souls - into a life of connectedness, of intimacy, of love” (p124). Thirdly, Jesus became our peace through his sacrifice. “The sacrifice of Jesus is what makes Jesus Jesus; it is what makes peace peace; it is what makes church church” (p126). Church is the place where we understand peace as Christ being present and working among us, “learning to worship God as personal; learning to accept and embrace one another as personal, as family members and not as competitors or strangers; learning to accept and follow Jesus sacrificially on the way of the cross” (p126).
Peterson highlights that Paul’s continual use of the word “therefore” reminds us that what he says in chapters 4-6 of Ephesians is based on everything that has gone before; the trinitarian nature of church and the blessings of God (p188). Church is not a job that we have the responsibility for. “Church is already complete, in the words of the Nicene Creed: ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’” (p188). When we understand the completeness of the church, “the lives that we live are representative of righteousness and holiness, freshly created in us by the Holy Spirit” (p188).

Again Peterson reminds us of the relational nature of our relationship with God. “‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.’ ‘Grieve’ is a personal, relational verb. We are being oriented in behaviours that provide appropriate conditions for growing up in Christ, for developing a mature life” (p201). The Holy Spirit is courteous, he does not coerce or manipulate. The Holy Spirit treats us with dignity and respects our freedom. “The Holy Spirit is God’s empowering presence, and what he empowers in us is a life of blessing and salvation, a life of resurrection. It is most definitely not a life of self-will, a life of self-righteousness, a life of using God to get what we want. If we live on those terms and with that mindset we will certainly be grieving the Spirit” (p202).

Paul goes on to show more of the Trinitarian rhythm of life, “a lived awareness of all the ways of God being God and then participating in these ways, which is practising resurrection” (p203). We participate in the being and the work of the Father and the Son. This is not the same as applying a biblical principle, in which the emphasis is on us putting something into action. “Nothing could be more misleading. God is as thoroughly involved in our participation as in his revelation and incarnation. And his way of doing this is the way of the Holy Spirit” (p203-4).

Instead we are told to be imitators of God, that is “we are [to absorb] into our praying imaginations a way of being. Watch what God does, and then do it his way” (p205).

Primarily the imperative to imitate God, is to love as he loves (p209). Our love is not only in imitation of God’s love, but also originates in God. “God’s love permeates all expressions of grace from Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is always personal, never impersonal; it is always ‘on earth as it is in heaven’, never an abstraction or idea; it is always particular in person and place, never a misty generality” (p209-10). Love is more than saying the right things at the right times. It has to do with what we say and do at all times. Love begins as a theological language. It is a language used in a listening, attentive relationship with God in all the revealed operations of the Trinity and a way of being in a listening, attentive, affectionate relationship with another person just as she or he is before us” (p214-5).

“In the act of worship we cultivate a life of love in company with the Trinity of love, and in company with men and women and children who are there with us, all of us practising resurrection” (p216-7). In order to build the relational ties with other people, this worship must by definition be corporate worship. Peterson suggests that common worship, with others, under conditions that are not what we would personally like, but that honours God is important for the process of growing in Christ (p217). Love is not a solitary act, it is relational. Love has to have a local context. “Love is not self-starting or self-defined; it is always ‘as Christ loved us’. So how do we acquire maturity in the practice of love that respects the relational, the local and the way of Christ? We go to church and worship God who ‘first loved us’” (p219).