

“Body-building”

For some people, myself included, one of life’s great pleasures is eating a mature, well ripened soft cheese. In order to achieve such depth of flavour, cheese is often left to mature for a long time in a cellar or a damp cave.

In Ephesians chapter 4vv7-16, the apostle Paul is encouraging the Christian believers towards maturity. But in the case of the Christian, maturity means becoming more like Jesus, and it happens when Christians serve one another with the gifts that Jesus has given them

### **#1 - We gather together to grow together**

The body-building that Paul speaks of (v12 & 16) is a maturing into the likeness of their saviour Jesus Christ (v13). Whilst we might immediately think of our personal growth in this area, Paul is clearly speaking in terms of the whole church family growing. And in examining the metaphors he uses, it is clear that his concern here is not numerical growth, but relational growth.

Paul’s aim is to encourage a growth in maturity which shows itself in members of a church family relating to one another, loving one another, caring for one another, just as Jesus would.

Why? Because this is one of God’s purposes for His church, and so unsurprisingly, God gives us all we need to make that happen... God gives us His word, and He gives us each other!

### **#2 - We grow together by serving one another**

Jesus was very clear that he came not to serve, but to be served (Cf. Mark 10v45), and his ultimate act of service was to give his life as a ransom for many, to pay the penalty for our sins.

As his followers, Christians are also called to a life of serving others, but here in chapter 4 we see it is not in order to earn our salvation (Jesus does that), but to enable the whole church family to grow in maturity.

The picture in vv7-8 is of the risen Jesus, returning home to heaven, but as he does so, he graciously hands out gifts along the way. Jesus gives these gifts to all believers for the benefit of the whole church family. It is when we use the gifts we have been equipped with, in the service of others, that the body of Christ grows/matures.