

Dear Friends,

I wonder when you last became aware of your limitations. St Paul tells us not to think more of ourselves than we should, and life has a way of letting us know when we fail to heed the apostle's injunction. *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."* Romans 12:3

I was recently treated to a new cordless drill. I was pleased with it. It was light yet more powerful than my previous one, and it was of a well-known reputable brand. Imagine my disappointment when after doing a simple job I tried to remove the screwdriver bit from the keyless chuck found that it was completely seized up. I twisted the chuck as hard I possibly could, but to no avail. I tried again and again, but it was useless. I even asked Hilary to have a go. It was quite impossible to release the chuck. It was surely completely seized up.

So it was that I took it back to B & Q. After navigating all the Covid-19 restrictions, I approached a tall young man at customer services. Apparently, he was responsible for the drill department. Ah yes, he said, 'I have this exact same one, they do get a bit stuck, especially when new.' He started a demonstration. 'Look, you hold it here and here like this and then twist it'. Then with one jerk the chuck came loose, and I became aware that maybe I am not as strong in the arm as I used to be! A salutary lesson. I left the store rather sheepishly, but glad that my prized new drill was still in working order.

I wonder if there is anything that you do which requires more effort than it used to do. Perhaps there is some task that you used to excel at, but at which now you are less than satisfied with your own performance and fail to meet your own high standards?

Of course, there may be many different factors that can affect our performance of different tasks. Stress and anxiety, low mood, decreased motivation can all play a part. Lack of available time is another consideration. Sadly, the ageing process and health conditions can also have an effect. Of course, there are retired people who still run marathons, play the violin superbly and do cryptic crossword puzzles in their coffee break. Actually, I have never been able to do any of those things even 30 years ago! However, realism

and a sense of humour, appreciation of other peoples' abilities, and thankfulness for the abilities we do have are all great gifts.

I think also that God often gives His people compensatory gifts as time goes on. Wisdom may increase as energy levels decline, so that we can work smarter, if not harder. The ministry of prayer is one that we can certainly develop as we mature.

Of course, we can also seek to improve our abilities at whatever stage in life we are. So, maybe I should get working with dumb bells or doing press ups in case my drill gets stuck again. I wonder what it is that you can do to maintain your abilities? Whatever we do, let us retain our humility and our humour!

God bless you,

Keith.

Keith C. Beckingham, Superintendent minister.