

## 'If only'

I made the comment, 'if only I was young again and could do it all different' to a friend the other day. It was almost a cry of despair really. I had looked back over the years and recognised the struggles and muddles I had experienced but with the knowledge that if I had known then what I know now many of them could have been avoided.

I had an incredible experience of the Lord when I was converted and knew myself to be really loved but that wasn't the end of the story. Because, much as I loved the Lord the same old struggles were still there and added to that I felt a failure because good Christians don't seem to have those problems. Sadly, no amount of jollyng myself along seemed to change how I really felt about myself underneath. On the surface I could look as if I had it all together but the reality was far from that.

I have been a member of this church for several years and gradually I have learnt what makes 'me tick' and why I respond in the ways I do. It was a relief to find out that I was ok and to realise there are always reasons why we do what we do. Much of course is down to my temperament but nurture has also played a huge role. My formative years were not helpful and were far removed from what would have made me a solid, secure person. All was not lost though and understanding was the key to setting me free and giving me a solid place to stand.

For me in my later years the experience of discovering who I am has at times been very painful. The cement had set hard! The Lord has allowed me to face some very challenging situations which have served to break through my defences. I, along with those who stood with me, have had to unravel a lot of tangled thinking and perspectives. I still make mistakes but the days of tortured thinking and mental condemnation are being replaced with good and objective perspectives. I have at times been really discouraged with myself but my desire to be what the Lord had made me to be has kept me moving forward – even if at times I have dug my heels in!

I can never underestimate the value of the understanding that the temperaments give us, both in our own lives and the lives of others. Things I had struggled with for years which would cause many sleepless nights have been laid to rest and the whole feel of my life has been changed. Life can be different – freedom is not just an empty promise.