

Blame

Those of us who can never find the remote when the ads come on, will all be familiar with the “ambulance-chasers”. These dedicated legal professionals will rush to the aid of the injured, and sue the pants off anyone even vaguely connected with their mishap. One of their ads asks, “Have you been involved in an accident, that wasn’t your fault?” But when was the last time anybody was involved in accident that *was* their fault? / have never been. Take my most recent visit to A&E: My wife had left me home alone with a hard-skin problem, *and* with access to a Stanley knife. Common sense should have told her that was a dangerous combination, but some people just don’t think, do they?

In a world where we have no-one to blame but other people, companies are resorting to increasingly desperate measures to avoid litigation. And so we have packets of nuts which (alarmingly) “may contain nuts”. We have sleeping pills with the warning “may cause drowsiness”, and then go on to advise us “not to operate heavy machinery” (If not for this timely reminder, I guess most of us would be doing wheelies in the JCB before turning in). It’s even worse in America, where a label on a toilet brush warns “not to be used for personal hygiene”, and a shopping bag which is attached to a pushchair bears the legend “do not place child in this bag”. Perhaps the strangest warning is the one stuck onto every tractor produced by a U.S. firm: It simply reads, “avoid death”....always sound advice, in my opinion.

The “blame game” may be terrifically popular these days, but it’s nothing new – as a matter of fact, it goes all the way back to Adam (“the wife made me do it”)and Eve (“the devil made me do it”). God didn’t seem impressed with *their* attempts to pass the buck, and I don’t suppose his attitude has changed much. People who refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions do themselves no favours in the long run – they *can’t* change, because their problems are always someone else’s fault. If (like Eve) “the devil made them do it”, we can be sure the devil will make them do a lot of other stuff as well. And perhaps that’s one of the reasons God insists on confession and repentance...as an aid to honesty, maturity and positive change.

For some people, owning up to shortcomings (and addressing them) is one of the least attractive aspects of Christianity. Our faith can stand the closest scrutiny, but may still be rejected because it has implications for how we live. I’d like to tell you that’s the *only* reason people reject it, but there is another. As we’re talking about owning up, I should say that this reason is entirely *our* fault. It is the perception of what church (or chapel) is like....and it is often an accurate perception.

For many people, an hour-long service is roughly as appealing as spending the equivalent time having unnecessary dental surgery. Less drilling, but more boring. Moreover, church “may contain nuts”, sermons “may cause drowsiness”....and if there is any better advice than “avoid death”, it can only be to “avoid church”.

Naturally, I’d claim that our fellowship is a completely different experience, and invite you to check that out. But for the seriously adventurous, there will be the opportunity in Autumn to investigate that other claim I made...the one about Christianity being able to stand the closest scrutiny. We’ll be running a course in which no question is off limits, and for which the cynical will be just as welcome as the inquisitive. If you miss out...well, you’ve only yourself to blame!