

By Revs. Robert and Casey Baggott
Community Church of Vero Beach

The Blame Game

There is a medieval fable about a land that had three castles and was protected by three brave knights. One spring a terrible dragon entered that land and began destroying the crops and terrorizing the people. The three brave knights decided to work together to rid the land of the terrible dragon. So the knights set out early one morning to look for the monster. They checked all of the places that they guessed a dragon might hide, but they didn't find him. As the day wore on, they began to grow frustrated, and in their frustration and their growing fear, they began to argue. They argued about which one of them could have prevented the dragon from getting into their land in the first place. They argued about which one had procrastinated the most in addressing the problem. They argued about whose plan was responsible for making that day's search for the dragon such a waste of time. They argued so fiercely and bitterly about who was to blame for these matters that by the day's end, they despised each other and abandoned their search for the dragon altogether. And the result was that the dragon just went right ahead devastating their lands and terrorizing their people.

Our friend, Cliff Shutjer tells that tale and then notes that the blame game is as prevalent and as divisive now as it was then. And now, as then, it's a massive waste of time and energy and often only serves as a diversion from the real problem at hand. When we spend efforts in the blame game, energy that could be used in rectifying the situation is used instead for name calling and finger pointing. Why do we resort to this blaming game? Why are we so quick to blame the media, the politicians, the leaders, the conservatives, the liberals? Why do we need to place the blame on someone – anyone, but us? Blaming seems to be a nearly irresistible human phenomenon as old as the first recorded human events. Think of the encounter in the Garden of Eden after the discovery that the forbidden fruit had been eaten. What happens? God asked Adam, "Who told you to eat the apple?" And Adam blames Eve. And how does Eve respond? She blames the serpent.

So, it's clear, blaming has a long history and has been well-practiced by all of us across the millennia. Is there any alternative? Maybe the only cure for the blame game is substitution of a different mind-set. Maybe we only end the need for blaming when we acknowledge our own very definite limitations, and stop expecting more from others than they can be expected to give. As our friend Cliff Shutjer puts it, "None of us is smart enough to move around in life assigning blame with the kind of certainty that's so common among us. So why waste our energies and our joy that way? God has better, more creative, and far more useful things for us to do with the minds, the abilities, and the time given us: things like healing, restoring, reconciling, and forgiving. For these are guaranteed to leave us far happier and peaceful, and more at home in life than even our juiciest blaming."

So, let's adopt a new all-American pastime. Let's swear off the blame game and instead, play the game of life with one another as treasured partners, which seems to have been God's desire for Adam and Eve, and us, in the first place.