

Who's afraid of Ebola?

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I imagine some of the people freaking out about Ebola consider themselves Christians. How ironic is that?

One of the reasons Christianity experienced exponential growth in its early years was that Christians became known for taking care of the sick and the dying during plagues. They, themselves, were not afraid to die, because they had a hope beyond this life.

Christians pretty much created the hospital. Think about that word, from which we get the word "hospitality." Hospitals were simply houses where hospitality was offered to the sick and dying.

It bothers me that, as President Obama has said, the U.S. military is in the best position to provide the kind of support needed to stem the Ebola crisis in West Africa. They have the resources that can be quickly mobilized to get the job done. That itself says something about our priorities, that it is the military and not the church or other non-governmental agencies that are in the best position to make a difference in battling the spread of Ebola.

I am not usually the type who says the government shouldn't be in the business of providing social services. Given the complexities of modern life, the government often is in the best position to build and maintain a social safety net. But that doesn't get the church or other social services institutions off the hook.

I just heard yesterday that West Africa needs 4,000 more beds right now to take care of the demand. Where is the Christian church? Should we not be working together to mobilize our resources to help meet that need? Or are we too afraid or too busy to be bothered, directing our emotional resources instead toward our fear about the spread of the disease?