



COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

3 Stages of Crisis: Acute, Normalization, and Recovery

By David Duncan

In the midst of a global pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), we wanted to share a few insights and recommendations for pastors and church leaders navigating these unsettling times.

We live in the Joplin, Missouri area. May 22, 2011 was a day of crisis—the Joplin tornado. It was the greatest loss of life from a tornado since modern record keeping began in 1950. In hindsight, it is clear that the crisis can be examined in 3 stages:

- The Acute Stage (immediate response needed)
- The Normalization Stage (learning to live in the new normal)
- The Recovery Stage (putting the pieces back together)

It is quite likely that down the road we'll be able to look back on the COVID-19 crisis and see these 3 stages as well. As this is written, depending upon you live, most communities are in either the acute or normalization stage.

How does these crisis stages apply to generosity, giving, and development/fundraising programs? Our work is primarily a work of relationships with people. Focus on people first, foremost, and forever.

Acute Stage (evaluate and prioritize people first)

- Make sure your people are OK.
- Start close and work out in concentric circles of relationship and influence.
- This is what genuine, honest, and sincere friends do for one another.

Normalization Stage (communicate well and regularly)

- Continue to check in with your people.
- The mission is still on-track and having impact.
- Operations have changed—here's how—we'll keep you posted.
- You're vital today and tomorrow—if you want to help, here are some ways.

Recovery Stage (not there yet—but consider doing this)

- Note major (even minor) changes to operations, programs, projects, etc.
- Note what is working and why—and what is not working and why.
- Note what appears to be truly lost (different).
 - Later you'll want to evaluate why.
 - Later you'll determine if it should be restarted or not.