

MONDAY MANNA

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MARKS OF A FAITHFUL INVESTOR IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Matt Bell

As the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the investing world grappled with its own upheavals. People who had money in the markets will likely long remember the period from mid-February to mid-March when the U.S. stock market fell 35% in just 16 trading days. Never before has the stock market so quickly switched gears from an all-time high to a bear market.

For those seeking to take a long-term approach to investing, there were other unsettling events. With pro sports shut down, the founder of a sports betting website turned to the stock market, live-streaming his day trading as millions of loyal followers tagged along. The prospect of quick riches surely played a role in an astounding 10 million new brokerage accounts being opened in 2020.

A sizable percentage of new investors chose a brokerage firm that made investing seem like a game by showering digital confetti on the screens of members who made a trade. To me, this felt like investing was becoming gambling; the principle that “steady plodding brings prosperity, hasty speculation brings poverty,” as Proverbs 21:5 teaches, was being cast aside as quaint, uninspired, and irrelevant.

We sent a survey to members of our Sound Mind Investing network, asking about their experience in the investment market last year. When we asked what had helped them navigate the big financial downturn in early 2020, 97% agreed with the statement, “Having faith that God would provide, no matter what happened in the market.” Many respondents cited practical factors that helped as well, such as good stewardship, and a steady-hand-on-the-wheel perspective about investing. But trust in God, reliance on the sound teachings of the Bible, and prayer were overwhelmingly affirmed. This faithful approach of God’s people never received any news coverage, but I am confident it delighted God’s heart.

When we asked about particular passages from the Scriptures our readers turned to, more than one-third of respondents said provided examples. As the market plummeted, some of them relied on verses such as, “*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7), and “*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you*” (Psalm 56:3).

As the investment market’s volatility spiked, they took comfort from biblical affirmations such as “*You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you*” (Isaiah 26:3), and “*I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust’*” (Psalm 91:2).

While millions rushed to online forums in a quest for quick riches, our members turned to God’s Word, meditating on verses such as “*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God*” (Psalm 20:7), and “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs*” (1 Timothy 6:10).

The financial stock market moves in cycles. We can be prepared by committing to a strategy that fits with our needs, and by filling our hearts with the timeless truths of God’s Word. As the Bible reminds us in the most-cited verse in the survey, “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight*” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

What was the impact of the pandemic and the long period of economic upheaval on your own financial situation? How did you react during the worst, most uncertain times?

Where did you turn during that time of turmoil? Did you interact with and consult with trusted friends, or seek other resources for guidance? What about turning to the Bible and God's many promises? Explain your answer.

How can general, broad promises in the Scriptures be applied to specific situations, such as the pandemic, global shutdowns, and its overall impact on the financial world? Do you think it is valid to do so? Why or why not?

Reading the Bible passages cited in this "Monday Manna," which are you familiar with? If you found any to be particularly meaningful, which ones were they – and why?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Psalm 37:3-7,34

Isaiah 40:31, 41:10

Jeremiah 29:11, 33:3

Matthew 6:19-21,24-34