

Surviving a stock market crash

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In September 1987, Australia experienced a disastrous stock exchange crash, in the wake of the one in the United States. Analysts had predicted problems on the economic front, but people who owned shares or who had invested in equity trust, insurance bonds, or superannuation pools were still caught off guard. Large amounts of money were lost. Many ordinary people were affected by the financial fallout. Brisbane couple Meg and Barrie McCauley were two of them.

The year had begun well for the McCauleys. They were engaged and looking forward to buying their own home. This would be several years away, they knew. Meg was going first to America to train as a Christian Science nurse. So they put on hold the "great Australian dream" of being homeowners. However, Barrie had a sizable sum of money for a down payment, so he decided to invest it in shares on the stock exchange. He anticipated that it would earn additional income while Meg was away.

By April, Meg had sold her own home, paid off her debts, and banked the small amount remaining from the sale. She said goodbye to Barrie and left for the United States. It was going to be a *long* three years there.

Then in October, Meg received a phone call from home. The news was devastating. Most of the money had been lost in the stock market crash.

"Barrie was extremely angry," Meg recalls. "Prior to the crash, he'd instructed the stockbroker to sell his various shares and invest the money in gold. He thought the broker had done it. So when the crash occurred, he wasn't too worried. But a couple of days later when he checked on his holdings, he discovered that the shares hadn't been sold until *after* the crash. The prices had been bad – much lower than he had expected.

"He was upset. The money was meant to enable us to purchase a home when I returned to Australia after my training. That wasn't going to happen now. Then I got upset. I began to think if I hadn't gone to the States, we'd already have been married and in our own home. Now we could never afford to buy a house!"

Meg says that it was at this point that she decided to pray about their situation. Barrie was steadfast in supporting her desire to become a Christian Science nurse. And this reminded her of a statement in *Science and Health*: "Desire is prayer; and no loss can occur from trusting God with our desires, that they may be moulded and exalted before they take form in words and in deeds" (p. 1).

"I could see that I had to trust God to take care of us," she says. Barrie also had a deep spirituality and abiding faith in God's beneficence. "So we both prayed in our own way to be forgiving and to overcome our great disappointment."

While all this was happening to Meg, she had another problem. She was trying to come to terms with living on a much lower income than she'd been used to. On top of this, her family began asking her to come back to Australia for a visit. She didn't know how she could do that. She didn't have any money.

"One day," she explains, "I was telling a friend about this. She told me, 'Stop looking at your bank balance! God's "bank" is abundant good. You can draw on this abundance any time you want.' This made me stop and think. I'd been looking at an empty bank balance and feeling poor. It was time to stop doing that and trust that God would meet all my needs."

And this is what happened. Meg received a grant that covered her school fees for two years. Money that had been owed to her for ten years was unexpectedly repaid. This allowed her to return home to Australia not just once, but twice – the second time to be married to Barrie.

The story doesn't end there. Meg graduated as a nurse and returned to Australia. But because of their financial situation, she and Barrie were obliged to rent half of a run-down house. She didn't like living there. She again began resenting the loss of the funds that would have helped them buy their own home.

"I knew that being resentful was counterproductive," she says. "So I decided to love the old house we were living in. Barrie and I sat down and made a list of the qualities that we felt make up a home. These included love, harmony, joy, trust, and expectation of good. Then I looked for these qualities in our current house. I became more appreciative of the improvements we'd made to the inside of it. And I was more grateful for the warmth and love expressed there. Within weeks of our doing this, Barrie received an inheritance, which was enough for us to purchase a lovely house."

Meg says that she and Barrie are so grateful to have come through an experience like this. Although they sustained a financial loss initially, in the end they were not deprived of anything that was good. Their dream of homeownership came to fruition. "It was an example," Meg says, "of this Bible verse: 'And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten'" (Joel 2:25).