

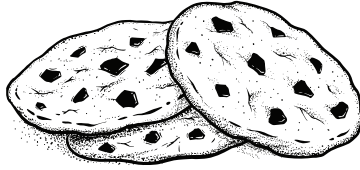
Signature Page

*"Our journey in life is not meant to be done alone.
It's something we travel together, enjoying the
process, as much as the destination!"*

-Brad Jenkins

To:

From:



COOKIES AND RETIREMENT

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

BRAD JENKINS, CFP®

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Biblical references, as noted in text, are from the English Standard Version (ESV), New King James Version (NKJV), or New Living Translation (NLT).

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DEDICATION

*To all those who understand that money can never
buy the only thing that truly matters. It's already been
purchased for a price we could never pay.
But the best part is, it's free!*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to take a moment and share from my heart as I express extreme gratitude to all those who have shaped and molded my life. It's the guidance, the coaching, the love, and honesty from those closest to me who have helped shape my career, enabling me to become the person I am today. And I would hope and pray that is a person who has been a blessing to others and that I've honored God in the process. It says in the scripture 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV), "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

I first want to recognize that everything I have is a blessing from God. I have never stopped working as hard as possible in order to maximize the gifts and talents God has given me. With that being said, I fully understand that I can do nothing apart from God. It reminds me of the verse in Proverbs 21:31 (NKJV) which says, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord."

I want to acknowledge my "Little Grandma," who not only shared her recipes with her family, friends, and her community, she shared her love with everyone who had the pleasure of being a part of her

life. Thank you, Little Grandma, for the memories and the delicious chocolate chip cookies!

I want to thank my amazing wife, who has been not only a huge support during our entire relationship, but has also been massively valuable when it comes to the success with Market Guard. She is a brilliant woman who has contributed significantly to our companies as well as the companies she has been a part of in the past. Brittany, words cannot express how much I love you and how grateful I am to have you in my life. I love you now, I'll love you always!

To all three of my amazing kids, Faith, Ava, and Jake, thank you for your love and support. Your constant encouragement creates a strength in me to continue to wake up each morning and to be the best dad and person I can be.

I would like to thank my mom and dad for their relentless dedication and sacrifice in order to provide me with every opportunity to succeed. I couldn't have asked for better parents. We have a relationship and a bond that I hope carries on with my children. Dad, thank you for all of the mentorship throughout the decades in this business.

I would like to thank Thomas Zebley and Stephen Odom for being amazing business partners. Thank you for everything you did to make this book become a reality. Your character, your faith, and your ability to live a God-honoring existence in both your personal lives and your work lives is an amazing example to all those around you. I'm truly honored to call you my business partners, but more importantly, my friends.

I would like to thank Heather Janson, who has been a major part of my business and the success we have achieved. Your sacrifice and dedication throughout the years have never gone unnoticed. I know deep in my heart we are where we are today because of your willingness

to be on this journey with me. To the rest of my team, the success we have experienced is a direct result of the contributions of each and every one of you. It takes the whole team to achieve the success we have accomplished.

I want to thank all of our existing clients, and all future clients, for taking the initiative to do everything you can to be good stewards of your money. We are honored to serve you and to be a part of your lives, helping you reach all of your financial goals.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the financial advisors who take their job seriously. To those men and women who understand that individuals are literally putting their lives in our hands as they look to us to provide financial guidance and security. It's been said that a financial advisor's role can often be just as important as that of a doctor. To all of those financial advisors who are acting as their clients' financial physicians, we salute you!

INTRODUCTION

As you begin to settle in and find the perfect spot to sit and open this book, I would like to share a very important piece of information. It's the “why” behind the book. Why I dedicated so much time, effort, and energy to writing this book and penning the words on these pages.

As a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, and an advisor in the industry for multiple decades, I have been an eyewitness to major threats that have devastated people's life savings over the years. For that reason, I want to help educate, inform, and empower investors so they can achieve the greatest level of success every investor deserves.

This book was inspired and written because we believe there are three potential threats to a person's investments and their retirement plans.

1. The Investor (Ourselves)

No matter how much we tell ourselves we don't get emotional when investing, it is scientifically impossible to detach our feelings from our investments.

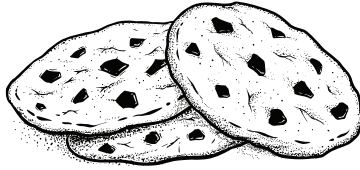
2. The Advisor (Others)

Most investors choose to hire a financial advisor. If this is done wrong, it could make the difference between total happiness or complete financial devastation.

3. The Markets (Outside Influences)

An educated investor is an empowered investor. When provided with easy-to-read and understand tools such as this book, it can help the investor take control of numbers one and two. Then, at that point, the markets are the least of your concerns.

Regardless of where you are on your journey of investing and retirement planning, I hope this book acts as a compass to help guide you to financial freedom.



— PART I —

CHALLENGES IN RETIREMENT

– 1 –

WHAT IF I LOSE IT ALL?

“It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong.”

– John Maynard Keynes

Paul and JoAnn seemed to have it all together. They had managed to save all their lives, which enabled them to invest nearly \$2.5 million with one of the large retirement firms that advertise heavily on TV.

If there was anybody who should have been free from the anxieties that often accompany retirement investing, it should have been them.

Like many wise investors, they wanted to make sure their investments were properly structured and ready for any unexpected market fluctuations, so they decided to meet with a financial advisor who was not their current advisor. They wanted a second opinion from a professional.

This meeting took place in early 2007, which, unbeknownst to them, was before the major financial crash that was looming just a handful of months away.

The financial professional shared with them, “Looking at your portfolio, I believe you should diversify your holdings to create more of a structured and well-balanced portfolio. There appears to be significant risk that could result in greater losses than your financial plan can handle.”

They checked back with their existing advisor, who convinced them everything was in good shape. They didn’t diversify their holdings or address any of the other issues the other advisor had raised.

It wasn’t long after their meetings that things began to fall apart in the market. Their current advisor continued to tell them, “Don’t worry, just hang in there!” But the reality was that their portfolio was suffering losses that would prove to be insurmountable.

How One Couple Lost Nearly Everything

Around the end of 2009, Paul and JoAnn realized they needed to make a change, and it needed to happen as soon as possible.

They recalled the timing of the conversation with their advisor, who cautioned them about making an adjustment to their portfolio back in 2007. At the time, the global economy was beginning to head straight for the Great Recession of 2007–2009. At the worst point of the recession, the stock market was down 58 percent. Paul and JoAnn’s investments did even worse. The portfolio their advisor had assured them was rock solid was down 68 percent. Suddenly, their \$2.5 million nest egg was worth less than \$800,000.

Worse, Paul died in 2008. JoAnn said there were multiple causes, but she believes that Paul’s anxiety, stress, and anger over losing two-thirds of everything they had contributed to his sudden death.

Paul didn't have any life insurance, an issue the other financial advisor had raised with the couple when they met during the second opinion consultation. This meant there was no death benefit to help JoAnn take care of Paul's funeral and other expenses.

Paul's pension from his past employer had been providing the couple with about 90 percent of their retirement income. But Paul's pension had no survivor benefit, meaning that upon his death, the pension he had paid into for so long went away, leaving nothing for JoAnn. This came as one of the most unexpected and devastating realities for JoAnn throughout this already painful experience.

These economic catastrophes meant that JoAnn would now be forced to make some significant lifestyle changes. In the past, Paul's pension provided \$12,000 in monthly income. Now, JoAnn had to get by on about \$2,100 a month, with most of that from Social Security. She found it impossible to get by on income that was about one-sixth of the income pension they were receiving before Paul's death.

A Disturbing Call

"Can you help me?" JoAnn asked her new financial advisor with fear in her voice.

Unfortunately, her financial situation had deteriorated so precipitously that there were not many options for turning things around at that point. After taking a fresh look at JoAnn's scenario, her new advisor had to share with her a very sad conclusion.

"JoAnn, I can help you, but you will have to make some lifestyle changes," he told her. "Unfortunately, one of those lifestyle changes means you will have to sell your condo and downsize significantly, perhaps moving in with your daughter at her house. Otherwise, you just don't have the income needed to make this work."

Over the course of a few years, JoAnn's resources had suffered a series of tough blows, and her lifestyle was seriously limited. And the sad thing is that none of this was necessary. Her situation resulted from faulty decisions, poor planning and, worst of all—horrible advice from their financial advisor.

The challenges JoAnn faced illustrate two facts. First, not all advisors are created equal. Second, not even the best advisors can stop the economic changes that happen over time.

The advisor JoAnn was now working with had great insights he shared with her.

He said:

We can help clients accomplish many things.

We can help them make money.

We can help them secure their futures.

We can help them live good lives full of happy memories.

But we can't help them create more time!

She's Not the Only One

There was another investor who also felt very confident leading up to 2008. He felt more comfortable with real estate as opposed to the stock market, so he went all in and bet everything on real estate, convinced that he had figured out the market.

“Who needs to diversify when the real estate market is so hot?” Karl boasted.

He didn't pay much attention when others tried to share with him about all the good reasons for building a diversified portfolio. But he should have listened. Karl's \$8 million portfolio was worth only about \$300,000 after the Great Recession hit.

There are good reasons for advisors repeatedly asking people hard questions about diverse portfolios and other core principles of retirement investing. These questions can help people avoid disaster.

The Power of a Plan

People make financial decisions for a variety of reasons. Perhaps a business associate made big profits in real estate. Perhaps a friend knows a financial advisor who's marketing a new retirement fund.

Overconfidence makes some feel all-powerful, which can be risky. Some investors have no problem charging head-on into risky investments, while others fear losing it all and play things super-safe. But that can carry a level of risk as well. Sitting in cash may give the appearance of safety, but things aren't always what they seem. As Robert G. Allen put it, "How many millionaires do you know who have become wealthy by investing in savings accounts? I rest my case."

"How many millionaires do you know who have become wealthy by investing in savings accounts? I rest my case."

– Robert G. Allen

I'm sure you've heard some people express their enthusiasm for investing in a particular fund or product. But if you ask them what their plan is, they look at you with confusion.

If Paul had planned ahead for his own death, he could have made some significant changes that would have helped JoAnn. Statistics show that men die younger than women. Using that information, he could have easily bought some life insurance and reviewed his pension options—two things that are part of any good retirement plan.

If Paul and JoAnn had planned for things like a recession, which is part of the economic cycle, they could have diversified their portfolio to protect much of it from the Great Recession.

Deciding where to live is another key part of a solid financial plan. “Everyone needs to live somewhere, but when housing is analyzed in the context of an overall retirement plan, you can look at the numbers and see what kind of living situation makes the most sense in the long term.”

So many people seek advice because they’re flustered and confused by the proliferation of options available to them. You may share the same feelings as people who say to themselves, “We see so many commercials and get so much information by mail that we’re confused about what’s best.”

A key component to understand is it’s not just about what you’re buying, or where you’re investing your resources, it’s about how it fits in with your plan. What is your plan? And how do these decisions fit in with your plan?

Remember, it’s natural for people to worry about their assets losing value. Valuations change every moment. But the power of planning means that you don’t need to fret about losing it all, or even a little. With the right plan, you can help protect and grow your assets to accomplish your financial dreams.