
February 3, 2026

Narratives Are Not Strategies

Financial markets never stop telling stories—and for good reason. Most people don't think naturally in principles, probabilities, or long chains of cause and effect. Stories translate abstraction into something human. They motivate action, animate conviction, and help people move rather than freeze. That isn't inherently bad. Stories often get people started—and frankly, I sometimes wish I were a better storyteller.



The problem arises when stories are mistaken as substitutes for judgment—when the narrative itself becomes the strategy rather than a prompt to think clearly about reality, risk, and tradeoffs.

Once we stop relying on narratives alone, we're left with something less comfortable but more useful:

constraints. Interest rates that don't conveniently fall. Government debt that limits policy choices. Geopolitical tensions that don't resolve on schedule. These aren't forecasts. They're conditions.

For much of the past decade—including periods of acute stress—markets operated in an environment where constraints were repeatedly absorbed by policy intervention. Capital was cheap. Liquidity was abundant. Policymakers used wide latitude to respond to stress. That period shaped expectations—and habits—and made some strategies appear more robust than they really were.

Well-built things don't rely on stories to hold them up.

Today feels different because it is. Higher interest rates and persistent inflation concerns aren't temporary inconveniences; they change the opportunity set. Borrowing costs matter again. Valuations face gravity. Sustainable revenue once more competes with speculation. This doesn't make markets hostile—it may simply make them more honest.

Many client portfolios benefited from exposure to precious metals over the past few years, and Friday's sharp selloff was a vivid reminder of how diversifying assets behave and how quickly things can turn. Markets don't move in straight lines. Gains were harvested and portfolios rebalanced where appropriate before year end—not in response to headlines, but as

Quote of the Day:

"The essence of investment management is the management of risks, not the management of returns."

– Benjamin Graham

2025 EVENTS

March 10 – Q1 Workshop

June 9 – Q2 Workshop

July 15 – Client
Appreciation Event

Sept 2 – Q3 Workshop

Nov 17 – Q4 Workshop

Dec 3 – Holiday Party

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE

Narratives Are Not
Strategies

Taylor's Take: 1099
Composite Timelines

Jenn's Jangle: First Time at
the Grand Canyon

250 Years Later: When
Loyalty Becomes the Risk

Narratives Are Not Strategies (cont.)

part of a disciplined process that respects both opportunity and constraint.

Reports that the Trump administration will nominate Kevin Warsh as Federal Reserve Chair—often associated with a more restrictive monetary posture—likely added to the volatility in assets sensitive to inflation and real-rate expectations. In addition, higher margin requirements likely contributed to the speed of the move down in silver, as leveraged positions were reduced across markets.

The temptation in moments like this is often to wait for clearer signals—lower rates, calmer politics, better visibility. But planning doesn't require certainty. It requires structure, patience, and an honest assessment of the conditions we face. Progress is made while constraints are still in place, not after they disappear.

Long-term success—whether in markets or life—comes from recognizing limits early and building within them. You don't need perfect conditions; you need structures that function across imperfect ones. That means diversifying sources of return, emphasizing balance-sheet strength, managing liquidity intentionally, and accepting volatility as part of the process—not a failure of it.

Uncertainty isn't something to solve; it's something to accommodate. Markets have compounded wealth through wars, inflation, political upheaval, and technological disruption precisely because they adapt to constraints rather than deny them.

At ALTIUS, our focus isn't on guessing which narrative will dominate next month. It's on building portfolios and plans that remain durable when narratives change—and constraints remain. Narratives come and go. Constraints endure....and working intelligently within them has always been the real strategy.

Jenn's Jangle: First Time at the Grand Canyon *Overcoming Fears and Embracing Wonder*

Visiting the Grand Canyon for the first time was an unforgettable experience. I was nervous about the height, mainly out of my fear of falling, but I pushed through and edged closer to my potential demise. I wanted to listen in on other visitors and their weird facts and stories. Arizona had some rain before my visit, making my footing uneasy at times and steering me clear of all the strangers peering into the same panoramic vastness.



I decided after finally getting here, I was going to attempt the Skywalk. I fitted the dirty protectors over my shoes and headed to the bridge. It was both exhilarating and breathtaking standing above the canyon floor, and I'm so glad I didn't let my nerves get the better of me... I did it! Sure, I could have spent more time out there, but that isn't the point here; it is a win for me that I am tallying under 2025.

I absolutely loved Eagle Point (pictured, do you see it?), with its stunning views and unique perspective of this natural wonder. It is a unique geological formation that, as you guessed it, looks like an eagle. It was a meaningful adventure that I'll always remember, but I have to admit, I liked the Badlands better!

Taylor’s Take: 1099 Composite Timelines

To ensure timely tax reporting while limiting corrections, Schwab produces Form 1099 Composite in three separate production runs, depending on the types of investments held, the reclassification status of dividends received and when trading has occurred in the account. Because many corrected 1099 forms are triggered as a result of securities with reclassified income or wash sales with deferred losses resulting from January purchases, Schwab uses two additional production runs to limit the amount of corrected forms sent out.

Production	Mailing date	Eligible accounts
First production	Late January to early February	<p>Includes brokerage accounts for which we have all necessary tax information.</p> <p>Forms for accounts holding securities at risk for income reallocation, for example, mutual funds, real estate investment trusts (REITs), and unit investment trusts (UITs), won’t be available by this date.</p>
Second production	Mid-February	<p>Includes brokerage accounts for which we now have the necessary tax information from issuers.</p> <p>Forms for accounts holding securities remaining at risk for income reallocation won’t be available by this date.</p>
Third production	Late February	<p>Includes remaining accounts with reportable transactions that have not received a form.</p>

Your Voice Matters to Us

We’re proud of the long-standing relationships we’ve built and truly appreciate the trust you place in us. To continue improving and growing thoughtfully, we invite you to share your perspective in our annual survey.

If you haven’t yet completed the survey, we encourage you to take a few minutes to share your feedback. For those who have already participated, thank you! We’re reviewing your responses and greatly appreciate your insights as we continue to better serve you.

250 Years Later: When Loyalty Becomes the Risk

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence next year, I'm reflecting each month on the enduring spirit of liberty that drove real people to risk everything—not the slogans or stagecraft we often see today, but as a lived commitment to self-determination, dignity, and financial freedom. That same spirit continues to shape our values and the work we do at ALTIUS.

In early 1776, independence was still uncertain. Many American colonists believed remaining loyal to Britain was the responsible choice. The Crown was powerful, established, and familiar. Loyalty itself was widely treated as a virtue—almost a moral good, independent of results. That assumption collided with reality at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, NC in February.

Local Patriot militia decisively defeated Loyalist forces, effectively ending British hopes of holding the colony. Within months, North Carolina would instruct its delegates to vote for independence. But the lasting importance of Moore's Creek isn't military. The Loyalists were not irrational or malicious. Many valued stability, order, and continuity. They believed loyalty to the existing system was safer than challenging it. What they failed to see is that loyalty and tradition without evaluation is not virtue—it's reflexive obedience.



Loyalty only makes sense if the object of loyalty still deserves it.

By 1776, British rule no longer protected colonial interests. It constrained them. Power was distant and unaccountable. Yet many remained loyal not because the system was just, but because it was familiar. Loyalty had become automatic—detached from judgment. That's the danger point. When loyalty becomes an identity rather than a conclusion, dissent starts to feel like betrayal. Independent thinking gives way to alignment. People stop asking whether something is true or effective and instead ask whether it signals belonging.

This pattern isn't limited to history. We see it in markets when investors suspend judgment and follow narratives simply because "everyone agrees." We see it in politics when movements reward conformity over thinking and allegiance over evidence. The labels change, but the mechanism is the same: outsourcing judgment to the crowd feels safe—until it isn't. The Patriots grasped something subtle but crucial: continuing loyalty was not the conservative choice; it was the risky one. Remaining dependent meant remaining vulnerable. The same tradeoff appears constantly in financial life. People remain loyal to strategies, institutions, or assumptions long after they've stopped serving their goals. Loyalty hardens into inertia—and inertia quietly transfers control away from the individual.

The Declaration of Independence would come months after Moore's Creek, but the real break had already occurred. Ordinary people chose judgment over habit—agency over loyalty for loyalty's sake. Political freedom required that clarity in 1776. Financial freedom still does today.

Freedom begins with ownership—of your choices, your money, and your future.

Michael Williams, CFP®
ALTIUS Financial, Inc
michael@altiusfinancial.com
303-584-9271

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