SCRIPTURE:
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways, surrender to him and he will make straight your path (Prov. 3:5-6).

MEDITATION:
The story of Nehemiah in the Old Testament is an example of trusting in God under extremely adverse situations. Nehemiah was cup bearer to the Persian king (circa 445 BCE) when he learned that the Jewish remnant in Jerusalem was in peril and the city walls remained in disrepair. He sought, and received, permission to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild. Upon arrival, Nehemiah gathered people together and began repairing the city walls. They immediately encountered extreme opposition from Judah's enemies on all sides (Samaritans, Ammonites, Arabs, and Philistines). Nehemiah 4:1-6:19 describes a multitude of ploys used by their enemies designed to discourage them: ridicule, name-calling, derision, fearmongering, threats of harm/killing, and rumors that they were already surrounded. Nehemiah and the people countered these deceptions with continuous prayer, encouragement, round-the-clock guards, resolution of serious internal squabbles, and Nehemiah's wise resistance to trickery. While exhausted, the people kept working from dawn to dusk, even sleeping in their clothes, with each builder carrying a spear in one hand and a tool in the other. As a result, Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt in a remarkable 52 days, offering safety and much-needed security to God's people.

What can we learn from this ancient story for this 2021 Easter season? Nehemiah and the Jewish remnant were a people filled with hopes and fears. Their enemies were real, and threats abounded, yet their trust remained entirely in God. Miraculous energy, wisdom, and success resulted. Today, Emmanuel (God with us) is still in control. One benefit of COVID-19 is that it has ripped apart the illusion that humans are in control, cultivating hearts that turn toward God. Indeed, God awaits our turning toward him in repentance and offers his redemption. Proverbs 3:5-6 summarizes this well. Let's turn ever-increasingly toward God and trust in him for everything this Easter season.

REFLECTION:
In what area of your life is God calling you to trust him more deeply? How can you begin releasing that area more fully to our Father?

Letting go and trusting God is hard. Our egos naturally cling to controlling our environment, leading to not so subtly believe we are the ones in control. Yet that is simply not true. At some point, God has a way of letting us know that he is in charge, not us. Those experiences can be painful, yet in retrospect, they are some of the most rewarding times in our lives because they cause us to deepen our spiritual walk with God and radical trust in him.

PRAYER:
Father, help us trust you at a deeper level this Easter season. Reveal to us a concrete way to "give up" control and depend on you more. Give us courage to walk toward you more fully, trusting in your unconditional love. Amen.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
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