

God's Design for Discipline

International Bible Lesson

Haggai 2:10-23

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"I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD" (Haggai 2:17—KJV).

"I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD" (Haggai 2:17—NRSV).

The Old Testament reveals many of the reasons and ways God will discipline His people, even today. God designs His discipline to lead people to repent of their sins and return to faith in Him and obedience to His commands. God's discipline can turn into severe punishment for people who remain in unfaith and rebellion against God. For example, God disciplined the remnant who returned from exile in Babylon when they refused to obey Him. He struck the products of their toil with blight, mildew, and hail. When His people repented, they turned from their selfishness and put God and God's will first in their lives. They took courage and began to rebuild the temple as God had commanded; then, God began to bless and protect them again. God told Haggai the exact date of their return to obedience, "the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the second year of [King] Darius" (Haggai 2:10, 18). From that day forth, they began to harvest enough seed for food, trade, and planting. From that day forth, the grape vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree produced their fruit in their seasons. Once God's people learned that their sufferings and lack of necessities were not just "bad luck," but the discipline of God for their disobedience to God, they repented, returned to working for God, and God blessed them abundantly. Of course, not all suffering is the result of our sins or God's discipline; Jesus suffered and declared, "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

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Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God told Haggai to ask the priests questions? How can asking questions be a teaching tool?
2. From your study of Haggai, how does God sometimes discipline His people? Why does God discipline His people?
3. When did God begin to bless His people?
4. How can someone become holy?
5. How do God's people recognize one another?