

# Beyond Blooming

## READING Hebrews 11

*Yeshua said that we can know whether they are a good tree or a bad tree by their fruit. He didn't say you will know them by their flowers. Or by how great they look. Or by how prosperous they are.*

About a hundred years ago the Austrian poet Rilke penned these words:  
“They wanted to bloom, but we want to ripen.”

He was comparing the wealthy lords and ladies who stood around admiring art, to the poor artists who create it. The lords and ladies were all about image, all about pretentious appreciation of the art. But the artists were sacrificing themselves, giving up worldly pleasure, giving up wealth, to make their artistic statement. It was something they believed in, something which was of primary importance to them.

Christians can be a bit like that too.

Some of us prance around, being seen, pretending we know what Christianity is all about. Saying all the right things. Looking good.

But others live it. Sacrificing themselves to make Christianity a reality in their lives. To make Christianity a reality in the lives of others.

It seems that Yeshua often talked about bearing fruit. He said that we can know whether they are a good tree or a bad tree by their fruit. He didn't say you will know them by their flowers. Or by how great they look. Or by how prosperous they are.

There have been some amazing Christians who have laid down their lives to bear fruit. Men and women who would rather die than to bear no fruit. Who would rather die than be a beautiful but barren flower.

These are some who have had a big influence on me and who I have become...

Hudson Taylor, Jackie Pullinger, Francis Schaeffer, Helen Roseveare, Geoffrey Bull, Jeanne Guyon, George Mueller, ... They produced fruit in their lives which went on to be seeds planted in mine.

It wasn't their goal, but they earned their place up there with the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11.

They took risks. They opened themselves up to attack, from the enemy, and in some cases also from within their own church! They entered bravely into the darkness of the world, bringing light into the gloom. They worked tirelessly. They lived frugally. They were totally focused on their own individual mission for the kingdom of God.

Vince Antonucci wrote a great little book called, “I Became a Christian and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt”. It's all about how people go on holidays and just do the ordinary touristy stuff, and all they bring back is the t-shirt. But some people go on vacation and have adventures. Things might not always go smoothly, but they bring back incredible, powerful stories.

So many Christians seem content with the t-shirt when there is so much adventure to be had.

So many Christians settle for mediocrity when God wants us to be warriors, people of valour, fighting spiritual battles, making a difference.

“They wanted to bloom  
and to bloom is to be beautiful.  
But we want to ripen,  
and for that we open ourselves to darkness and travail.”