

Introduction

In James 2:14, the Bible reads, What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?

Faith without works is dead. But what about works without faith in Jesus? It is possible to do the “works” without genuine faith in Jesus Christ, which leads to deception and a sense of false security. In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus warns us about this very thing, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ [23] Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’

Obviously, we don’t want Jesus saying this to us. Hopefully, this booklet can help us grow in our faith in Jesus and do the “works” as outpouring of our faith in Jesus.

In chapter 1, we introduce the concept of the “faith ecosystem”. In chapter 2, we explore the three common roots that one can plant in their faith journey. This includes faith in church, faith in self, and faith in money. We continue to explore the corresponding branches (faith carriers) that result from our faith being rooted in the church, self, and money. Finally, we discuss the fruits that result from our faith being rooted in the church, self, and money. In chapter 3, we discuss the faith that is rooted in Jesus Christ and the corresponding branches and fruits, as a result of our faith being rooted in Christ.

Each chapter ends with the 3R’s; Retention, Reflection, Response. Hope you find this booklet helpful in being rooted in our faith in Jesus and may He tell us well done good and faithful servant on that great day.

Chapter 1: The Faith Ecosystem

Faith is not simply a religious word. Faith or belief is intimately tied to all aspects of life. For example, we may believe in ourselves, our family, or our passions. Think of a person who dedicates their life to a cause. They believe in the cause, and that is why they sacrifice and endure hardships. But they wouldn’t have it any other way, because they believe in that cause. What drives faith? Is it an emotion? Is it a rational set of propositions? Is it from our childhood? Is it something we learn? When we step back, we recognize an ecosystem that integrates our faith as well as our expression of our faith. Faith is like a tree. It has roots, a trunk, branches, and fruit.



Let's define each of the terms;

1. Roots

This is the source of our faith. Before we continue, we ought to define faith. What might seem like a simple term is quite slippery and hard to define. For some, faith is the biblical definition from Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen". So, for some, faith is "religious" and requires blindly accepting because it can't be seen. But how would this account for expressions such as "believe in yourself"? Faith is a much more nuanced concept. Even Hebrews 11, the entire chapter, describes faith as a challenging, sometimes rewarding, but other times harmful and detrimental (Hebrews 11:13) experience. The source or roots of our belief system are complex and sometimes not fully clear to even us. But nonetheless, the effect of our faith is evident.

For example, if the root/source of one's faith is self-belief, then everything they do would be shaped by that belief. How that person acquired that "self-belief" is a valid question, but the answer is complex and beyond the scope of this book, except to ask the question, can one know fully how they acquired that self-belief? This again highlights both the complexity of the topic and the enormous impact faith has on each of us.

2. The branches

The root feeds the branches. The branches channel what the roots provide. Just like in a tree, nutrients from the roots travel up the trunk and out into the branches. So, branches carry what's in the root. The branches are *faith carriers* - they hold and express what the root provides. Without branches, there is no space for fruit to grow. We can mistakenly assume that there is only one root (Jesus), one branch (Jesus), and one fruit. But Jesus Himself speaks of many branches (John 15), some bearing fruit, some not. Branches are vital and plural. They connect the root to the fruit. This is where it gets even more interesting. Each person has several branches or faith carriers. It is not monolithic.

For example, one can have the 'faith in family' branch, or have 'faith in vocation' branch. In John 15, Jesus teaches us that some branches are good, whereas others are harmful and need to be tossed (John 15:1). Of course other branches, according to Jesus have to be pruned.

So, we all don't come with just one root and one branch. But often, that is the message we might receive, especially at church. For instance, the focus is to get the church to "do something", maybe it is to give more money. Then the thrust of the message is to be grateful for what Jesus has done for us, and we ought to then do more for Him by giving more of our money. The assumption is that each of us has only one source of faith (that being Jesus) and only one branch (faith carrier) that will lead to one fruit (giving more money). As you notice, though, the message is not addressing the

root or the branch, but only the desired outcome and neither is the message accounting for the diversity and complexity.

3. The fruit

This is straightforward. The fruit is the outward, often observable results. This is the aspect that is often targeted and emphasized.

This complex system is always at work in individuals, communities, and societies. Even those who are not religious live by faith in something. The question is not **if** you have faith, but **in what**.

As you read this, you might be wondering, what about the tree trunk? The trunk is the core of the person. It is like the internal processor that brings it all together. The roots deliver to the branches via the trunk and the fruits are the result of the entire ecosystem operating efficiently. The trunk can also be seen as the heart of the operation.

Faith ecosystems are complex and multifaceted. We don't simply place faith in one singular thing; rather, our trust often spans multiple areas of life, which can sometimes pull us in different directions. For instance, a person might place faith in their local church community while also trusting in the legal system that governs their society. These overlapping spheres of faith can complement one another—or at times, they may conflict, requiring us to navigate and prioritize where our deepest loyalties lie.

Additionally, each person has their unique faith ecosystem—diverse, multifaceted, and shaped by their experiences, values, and relationships. What one trusts deeply might differ greatly from another, reflecting the rich variety of perspectives and commitments that make up our shared human experience.



Understanding the roots, branches, and fruits of faith offers valuable insight into the specific struggles someone may face on their spiritual journey. This framework is particularly useful within the church context. For preachers and teachers, it encourages focusing on nurturing the ecosystem of faith, rather than simply harping on producing the fruits, which can lead to exasperation, frustration, and discouragement. By tending to the entire ecosystem roots, the spiritual growth becomes healthier, more sustainable, and deeply rooted.

The 3R's:

- **Retain:** Faith is not exclusive to religion. Everyone has a faith system, even if they call it something else.
- **Reflect:**
 - What do you currently have faith in?
 - Role play: Imagine being someone who believes entirely in self—how would that shape their behavior?
- **Respond:** Write down three areas where your faith is most evident. Are they healthy? What are they rooted in?

Chapter 2: The Roots, Branches, and Fruits?

Let's explore three common roots and the corresponding branches and fruits.

1. Faith in Church
2. Faith in Self
3. Faith in Money

Faith in Church

Take a moment to think about what would happen if our faith is rooted in the church?



As we shall see later, when our faith is rooted in Jesus, one of the branches (faith carriers) is the church. However, when the church itself becomes the root then this leads to all kinds of distortions of what church should be. Sadly, this is all too common whereby the church becomes the root instead of Jesus being the root.

Branches:

So, what are the corresponding branches when the church is the root?

- Faith in church leaders
- Faith in church programs
- Faith in church system
- Faith in church structures
- Faith in a particular denomination
- Faith in tradition of people
- Faith in “how we do things”



Each of these points can be a chapter on its own. But let's take faith in “how we do things” as an example. This can also be called the “sacred cows”. From Exodus 32, when God's people made the golden calf and decided to worship the calf, rather than worship God. When faith in church is the root of our faith, then we will worship the sacred cows of the church system. This could be the terminologies used by the church, such as discipleship or discipling, It could be the way the church service is organized, all the way down to the song selection and the singing.

Fruits:

What are the fruits when church is the source (root) of our faith?

On the positive side, there will be high commitment to the church and its activities. A deep sense of purpose and feeling of togetherness and belonging. On the other hand, this could lead to spiritual abuse, spiritual burnout and possibly disillusionment, especially if there are scandals in the church.



Faith in self:

As we shall see later, when our faith is rooted in Jesus, one of the branches (faith carriers) is 'faith in self'. We will see, how vital it is to have healthy self belief. However, when the 'self' itself becomes the root then there are unintended consequences.

Branches:

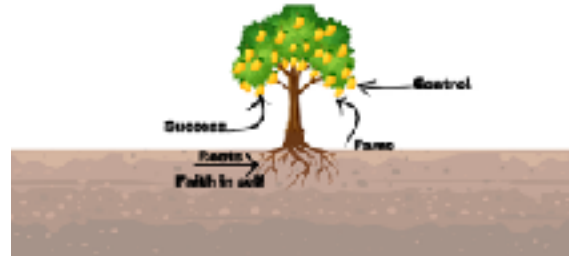
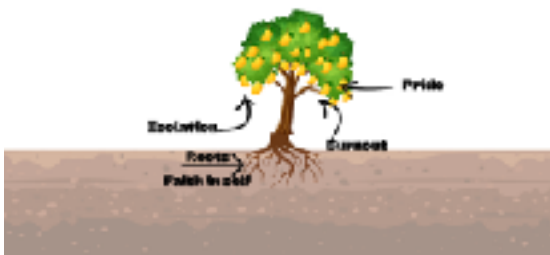
- Self discipline
- Goals and direction
- Self reliance
- Personal moral code
- High ownership



Fruits:

What are the fruits when 'self' is the source (root) of our faith?

On the positive side, this can produce high achievism, lots of success, possibly fame. But on the negative side, pride, isolation and loneliness, burnout. Eventually, the tree will collapse.



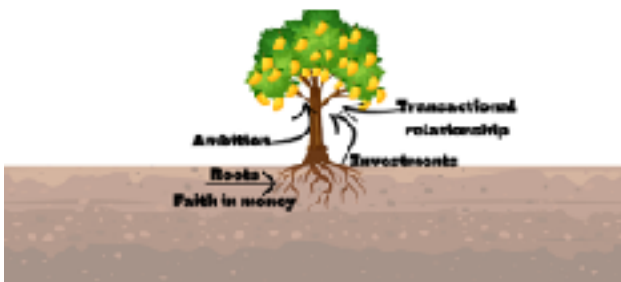
Faith in money:

What happens when one's source (root) of faith is money? This includes financial systems, material security and pursuit of wealth as ultimate source of identity.

Branches:

The faith carriers would include:

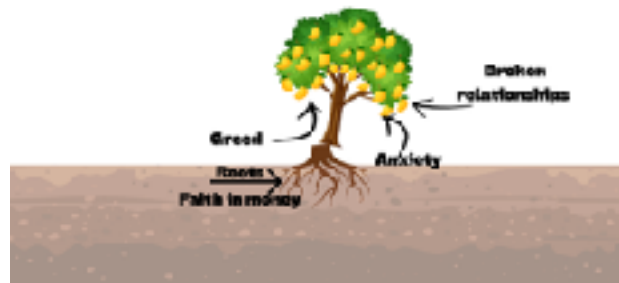
- Ambitious
- Investments and asset accumulation
- Transactional relationships
- Ambiguous morality



Fruits:

What are the fruits when 'money' is the source (root) of our faith?

Of course, the person would become wealthy. Now whether they are satisfied or not with their wealth is a different question all together. Most probably, they won't be and would continually pursue wealth to the detriment of everything else. They would have a luxurious lifestyle possibly. They could possibly withstand economic downturns better than others. But when money is the root of one's belief system, then the fruits are surprisingly not as juicy as one would expect. The fruit of having money as the source of faith is greed, anxiety, discontentment, idolatry, broken relationships and possibly moral compromises.



All these roots produce fruit to some degree or another, but they do not produce permanent stability. "They change over time with changing circumstances. Jesus describes this instability as building on sand (Matthew 7:24–27). Imagine constructing a luxurious, expensive house right on the beach, close to the water. It might look stunning, but when the waves come, it has no chance of standing firm. In the same way, rooting our faith in things like success, relationships, or even religious institutions may appear solid, but they shift with the tides of life. Only faith rooted in Jesus provides the unshakable foundation we need.

The 3R's:

Retain – What truth will you hold on to from this chapter?

Retain the insight that not all roots are equal. Church, self, and money may seem like stable foundations, but they are **shifting sands**—helpful in some ways, but **never meant to be the source** of your identity or security. Only Jesus is the true, unchanging root that brings life.

Reflect – How are these truths playing out in your life?

- Which of these three—church, self, or money—have you unknowingly leaned on as your primary root?
- Role-play: Imagine advising a friend who bases their worth on their achievements or income. What would you say to redirect their root to Jesus?
- Scenario: What happens when a person's faith is in the church, and that church disappoints them? How does their spiritual ecosystem respond?

Respond – What practical step can you take today?

- Pray: “Lord, reveal to me where my faith is rooted. If it’s in anything but You, gently uproot it and plant me firmly in Christ.”
- Write down 3 situations where you typically rely on self, money, or church for security or worth. Then rewrite them as opportunities to trust Jesus as your root.
- Commit to one small act that shifts your trust—like meditating on Scriptures about Christ as the cornerstone (e.g., Colossians 2:6–7 or Matthew 7:24–27).

Chapter 3: Rooted in Jesus

When our faith is rooted in Jesus, we are aligned as an ecosystem. Meaning, our roots, our branches and our fruits are all aligned. We live and breathe, trusting in the person, work and Lordship of Jesus. What is interesting is that our faith rooted in Jesus produces in us the desire to “die” to self. This may seem odd, but that is the interesting experience of being shaped by our faith in Jesus. In Galatians 2:20, the apostle Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. There is something seriously liberating when we are rooted in Jesus. Our entire ecosystem experiences peace or shalom. What is more we then contribute to the shalom of others.

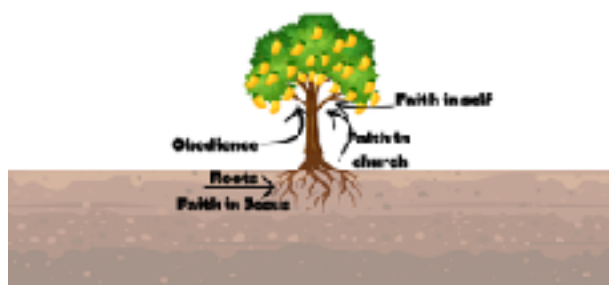
So let's look at the branches, when we are rooted in Jesus.

Branches:

- Inner peace
- Purpose
- Faith in church
- Faith in self (our redeemed identity)

- Obedience to Jesus
- Willingness to change (repentance)
- Openness to continual dying to self and being alive in Christ (baptism)

When we are rooted in our faith in Jesus, then we operate on a completely different level. We want to be more like Jesus and this inspires us to live a life of repentance and baptism. These are often used as religious terms, but there is so much more. The word repentance conjures up the image of someone who comes to realize the truth of a situation and is willing to turn from the path they are on to a new path. Baptism is the expression and experience of dying to self and being raised to new life. When we are rooted in Jesus, we want to be raised to new life. This would include discarding the things that keep us trapped in our old life.



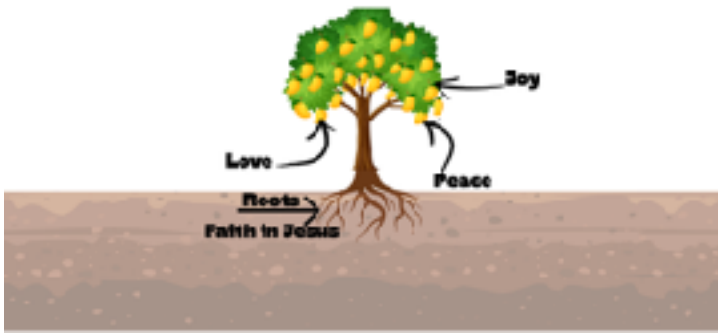
Notice also that when our faith is rooted in Jesus, our confidence in who we are begins to grow. Our self-belief shines—not because we trust in our own strength, but because we know we are dearly loved by God. We are saved not by our works, but by His work on the cross. This truth liberates us. It frees us from the need to prove ourselves, and instead invites us to discover who we truly are in Christ. Our identity is being renewed, reshaped into the image of God. We are becoming more and more like Jesus. Of course, this journey is not linear. It's marked by twists and turns, moments of doubt and seasons of growth. But through it all, we can be secure in Jesus, trusting His Spirit to lead, shape, and sustain us.

So, what are the fruits?

Fruits:

The visible evidence of our faith include:

- Our love for people
- Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22)



The 3R's:

Retain

Key Insight:

When our faith is rooted in Jesus, our confidence and sense of identity are strengthened—not through self-effort, but through the unshakable truth that we are deeply loved and accepted by God.

Why This Matters:

This foundation transforms how we see ourselves. It shifts our self-belief from striving to security, from performance to grace.

Reflect

- **Scenario:** Imagine someone whose sense of worth is entirely tied to their performance at work or approval from others. What happens when they fail or are rejected?
Now imagine someone whose worth is grounded in Jesus' love and finished work. How might they respond differently in those same situations?
- **Role-play Exercise:**
With a partner or journal, practice speaking affirming truths over yourself—not from a place of self-flattery, but grounded in Scripture. For example:
"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
"I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works."

Respond

- **Action Step:** Begin a daily rhythm of reminding yourself of your identity in Christ. Choose 1–2 Scriptures to read and meditate on each morning for the next week.

- **Journal Prompt:** Write a letter from your “future self” rooted in Jesus—describing the peace, joy, and security you feel from living daily in that truth.

Conclusion

Many people have a **Jesus fruit on a non-Jesus branch**—they try to be kind (fruit) because of family upbringing (branch), not because of Jesus (root). That works until stress or trauma comes.

Others have a **Jesus root**, but their faith hasn't yet extended to all branches. For example, they trust Him for salvation but not for finances, relationships, or their future.

In John 15, **Jesus doesn't say all branches are fruitful**. Some need pruning. Some wither. Some are disconnected. Which means **the quality of your branch affects the quality of your fruit**, even if your root is technically Jesus.

Conclusion

The message of James 2:14 challenges us to examine not only what we believe, but how that belief shapes our lives: *“What good is it...if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save them?”* Faith without works is lifeless—but so too are works without faith in Jesus. As we saw in Matthew 7:21–23, even impressive spiritual deeds mean nothing if they are not rooted in a real relationship with Christ. This booklet has been an invitation to reflect deeply on the **ecosystem of our faith**—the roots, branches, and fruit that define our spiritual lives. It is not enough to simply appear fruitful. We must be sure of what we are rooted in.

In **Chapter 1**, we introduced the concept of the **faith ecosystem**, revealing that our beliefs are not isolated—they form a living system that affects our behavior, decisions, and spiritual outcomes.

In **Chapter 2**, we examined three common but unstable roots: **church, self, and money**. Each of these can support branches and produce fruit, but ultimately, they shift like sand beneath a house in a storm.

In **Chapter 3**, we discovered what it means to be **rooted in Jesus**—the only foundation that brings lasting peace, alignment, and fruit that endures. When we are rooted in Him, our branches reflect His life in us: peace, purpose, humility, obedience, and transformation.

This framework is not just theoretical. It is a tool for self-examination and growth. The **3R's**—**Retain, Reflect, Respond**—offered at the end of each chapter are meant to help you internalize these truths, wrestle with them honestly, and take concrete steps forward.

The hope and prayer is that this resource helps you anchor your life more deeply in Jesus, so that your works are not just outward actions, but the natural outpouring of a faith that is real, living, and rooted in Him. So when the day comes, may we hear Jesus say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*”—not because we did impressive things, but because our lives flowed from a deep and abiding faith in Him.

Stay rooted in Christ. Let your faith live.

About the Author

With over 15 years of experience in cross-cultural education and faith-based mentoring, Raj Chandra is dedicated to helping people grow in wisdom, purpose, and spiritual maturity. He is passionate about equipping others to live deeply rooted lives—lives that are anchored in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.

As an educator, preacher, and leadership mentor, he has served individuals and communities across generations. Whether through small group discipleship, one-on-one coaching, or creative storytelling, his mission remains the same: to help people align their inner beliefs (roots) with their outward actions (fruit), grounded in the truth and grace of the gospel.

He is the creator of the **3Cin3D Discipleship Resources** (www.youtube.com/@3cin3d) initiative,. He integrates different tools to communicate timeless biblical wisdom in fresh and accessible ways. These media-rich approaches support his work in **biblical instructional design**, helping learners engage deeply with Scripture even in asynchronous, online environments.

In a world filled with shifting sands, Raj Chandra invites readers and viewers to build their faith ecosystem on the unshakable foundation of Christ—so that one day, we may hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Subscribe to www.youtube.com/@3cin3d on YouTube for more videos, animated Bible teachings, and practical Christian living resources. Don't just learn—live it out.