

WALKING WITH YOUTH – JESS

While holding the worn bible that has been used for over ten years, student fellowship mentor, Jess stated that while people are used to reading the bible digitally, she still preferred the paper version. The marked bible, is full of her own writing, is a testament of her faith journey; all the stories and memories that is marked in this bible is the warmth that can never be replaced by a digital bible. Everyone who knows Jess will describe her as a person with warmth, a respectful sister who is willing to listen and full of empathy. When asked to describe herself, Jess indicated that she's a normal person who wants to listen to and walk with youth.

Jess and her family came to Canada in 2023. While adjusting to her new life, she devoted herself in March to serve in Zion and became one of the mentors of student fellowship. Serving youth was her calling that budded when she was still studying. This continued to when she was a high school teacher, then to when she was studying counselling and theology, to her work in counselling, and when she worked as a lay pastor. Jess always liked to interact with youth. She hoped to be a person who understands, accepts, and walks with youth as they grow up. Jess is thankful for the opportunity to serve the youth in Zion while experiencing God's lead. She finds Zion admirable as it is willing to listen to different opinions and displayed a high degree of flexibility.

Within Generation Z, Jess understands that youths, due to the explosive amount of information, experience a high degree of stress and loneliness. Due to high expectations of themselves and the distancing of human relations, their emotions are not adequately cared for. Jess believed that youths must have at least one adult that understands and accepts them as they mature. She hoped that her experience in counselling and her understanding of theology and help youths understand themselves better, and shepherd them with God's word.



After serving in student fellowship and being with the students for a year, through different fellowship meetings and listening to their stories; seeing their tears and struggles, and experiencing their joy, Jess believes that lives are interactive and one always affects another. Therefore, she views every conversation as a precious gift. This is especially so, during a 6 – 7 hour drive conversation during the East Coast STM. Through this experience, she understood their lives, hobbies, and their views on many issues. Jess likes to invite students to her home for dinner as that would provide her an opportunity to get to know them and to pray for them. Jess acknowledged that her culinary skill may not be the best, and appreciates their tolerance. While the food may not be the best, but she hopes her listening and understanding can be a perfect dessert. Jess continuously remind herself that she needs a humble and authentic heart when serving in youth ministry. She needs to consistently upgrade herself as everyone is unique, with their own background, experience, and most importantly, that they, themselves are valuable. Whenever they are willing to open up and share, we must pray for them.

Apart from caring for youths, Jess also cares for their parents. She is now part of their fellowship and studies the bible with the parents. They also share and pray for each other with regards to the challenges of communicating with children as well as their experiences in Canada as they experience the grace of God together. Jess said, "We do not need perfect parents. All we need is to do whole heartedly share our experience and learn together." She hopes whether it be the parents or the children, that we can all hold on to God tightly and continue to learn and grow.

