



THE JOURNEY OF LIFE OF A DEAF CHILD
AND HIS FAMILY WITH GOD

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A true story of a faithful family that, filled with God's love and wisdom, learns to overcome their life challenges by depending completely on God and His power.

This book "God Is Not Deaf" takes us through the family's life journey and is a true testimony that God hears us. Indeed He is the almighty God who is alive and is able to help us when we call out to Him. He has said through His prophet Jeremiah "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer 33:3).

The family's story shows us that whilst we may not be able to avoid problems and challenges in life, we can instead strengthen our faith in God by trusting and completely surrendering to Him who has great plans for each of us, "plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11). I am truly blessed by this family's story and I believe that readers of this book will also be blessed.

DR STEPHEN TANUWIJAYA

Agape Indonesian Church - Sydney

Senior Minister

It was few years ago when I first met Yahya, he was a student at Limkokwing University at that time, and member of our church (FGCC).

Throughout these years, I personally see his spiritual growth, be it on his willingness and involvement in his cell group at Cyberjaya area as well as many other services that he have contributed at church. We also have the opportunity to spent some time together on several occasions at futsal court.

I have a strong positive impression about Yahya. His physical limitation is not, in anyway, stopping his longing to know God, to grow, to pursue education. And what's admirable is that Yahya even brave himself to take a responsibility as Cell Group Leader, leading and building his friends that has no physical disability.

I thank God for His grace, for the support of his parents, church members, friends and many others; because of all of that, Yahya is able to go through the storms of life, uplifted and giving impact to others like what he is doing now. His life testimony has inspired many others. May God continue to use Yahya in magnificent way.

Ps. EDDY CHANG

Fresh Generation Community Church - Malaysia
Founder & Senior Pastor

From the first time I saw the video on Yahya's part of life, my heart melt with the warmest sympathy. When later I read the Indonesian version of "God is not Deaf (Tuhan Tidak Tuli) written by the whole family members, then I was soaked with tears. I cried a lot, imagining the totally deaf-mute boy struggling alone for survival in so many unfriendly life conditions.

Even when I was given the honour by the family to help in editing the English version of the book, I couldn't restrain my tears from rolling down. Most of the time I cried. I imagined if I were him I would have long been discouraged and totally given up. Or..... if he were my own child, I would never have a heart to let him go study abroad to face all the challenges as a disabled boy, all alone, among the normal people. Never.... I would say.

I felt the sorrow so deeply and slowly, my respect rose to Yahya's parents who had done all the best things they could to bring up Yahya and faithfully led him to have so strong faith in God.

And as the reward, they were given the privilege to see God's wonderful loving action through Yahya's life. I would say that Yahya is the best gift from heaven, a wonderful blessing and a great honour for the family to rear God's miraculous child, who is a vivid image of His love.

Amid my rolling tears when I was editing the English version of the book, which was translated by another family member of Yahya's, I shuddered. God was reminding me of something, I felt as though He scolded me : " If Yahya as a deaf-mute young man has been so strongly and unconditionally depending on Me since his childhood and put his entire life into My care, why you, my normal child, often got worried and panicky when things go wrong? Didn't you trust Me?" Well, that was when Yahya was reminded by God in a bad situation, to always trust Him and be thankful to Him in all kinds of situation....

My cry broke out : " Lord ...forgive me for so often forgetting that you are my Helper, my Provider and my Caring Father, the Almighty God. Thank you Lord, through a disabled young man, you have rebuked and reminded me to again get back to the right track, always depending on You, and be thankful in all situation."

Then I felt so.... so.... very blessed. May this book becomes a blessing also for many !

JACKIE MUAYA- RAUBUN.

Editor of the book "God Is Not Deaf"

GOD *Is Not* DEAF



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GOD IS NOT DEAF

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By Stephanus Junianto, Ratna Pudyastuti, Grace Suryani, Elisabet Listiyani, Yahya A. Tioso & Monika Yuliana

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UNDERSTANDING THE COVER DESIGN



“What’s the meaning of typewriter on the front cover ?”

Answer : The stories were written by six of us based on our unique perception and experience just like the old typewriter have many keys with each unique “letter” and the conclusion from all of us is **“God Is Not Deaf”**

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APPRECIATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to God who has entrusted Yahya, who is such a special personality, to be born, grew, and developed in our family. Through His blessings, guidance and teachings, God continues to process our lives – as individuals and as a family – so that we will always *looked unto Him, and are filled with light and our faces will not be ashamed. (Psalm 34:5 KJV)* – In His faithfulness God guided us, who often did not understand His will and many times we made mistakes. However, God is never wrong in His ways and patiently taught us until we come to an understanding that this life was not about us. It's all about Him!

It has been for quite sometimes since a few friends encouraged us to write this book. And, only with the blessings of our Lord, and the help of many friends, eventually we are able to conclude this book- for publication.

We would like to express our gratefulness to God and also wish to thank Father Anton, Father Bambang and all the teachers at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur who had helped us in accepting Yahya's condition and in making the right decision for his education. With utmost dedication and patience they had taught, trained and educated Yahya in speaking and other skills as well as in fighting spirit to grow as a deaf child. There were so many more friends who had also taken parts in the growth process of Yahya and our family. They are Pastor Abraham

Soetrisno and his wife, Mrs. Ratna, Mrs. Marjam Rudijanto, and Yahya's fellowship friends in Jubilee, Malaysia, and Melbourne, not forgetting the teachers at *SLB-B Santi Rama*, the principal, teachers and staff at Jubilee Junior and Senior High School the teaching staff at Limkokwing University in Malaysia and Swinburne University in Melbourne. Our thanks also go to *GKI Layur* and *GKI Pinangisia Komisi Tunarungu* (Deaf Community Church) in Jakarta, FGCC Church in Malaysia and GEMPAR Church in Melbourne. With their supports, Yahya grew in the community of believers and came to know his Lord more closely.

Our gratitude also goes to Pastor Faith Tung and her staff from "Pelangi" school of prayer, who has guided us in understanding and responding to the will of God, living close to Him, and listening to His voice, so that His plans be fulfilled in us. Because the purpose of our life is just to respond correctly to His will and glorify Him.

We also thank our sisters of the Tioso family, and the family of Hartowidjaja; who had always been helpful, supportive, and prayed for us during our family struggles. Our special thanks is dedicated to baby sitter Mamik, who had cared for and educated Yahya from 10 months old to 23 years old. We highly appreciate her love and loyalty. We also thank Onsi and Kathy, our nephew in Melbourne who had opened their home for Yahya to stay for a while and had always been helpful whenever Yahya faced problems while he was struggling to find a job in Melbourne.

With thankful hearts we give our appreciation to Tarjono and Ginasari Basoeki, Monika's parents who had raised and educated Monika, and had offered their support and directions to Yahya and Monika in their married life. Also to Rev. Lingky Hartono who blessed them at their holy matrimony. Thanks for the love and efforts given.

We also thank Espira, Phodi, Adit, and all Espira staff who created Yahya's testimonial video of "*Tuhan Tidak Tuli*" (God is Not Deaf). We realized how the video had been used by God to bless a lot more people through the digital world. It was the video who motivated us to write this book under the same title. Keep doing the good work to bless others and to glorify God through multimedia.

Personally I thank my friends at Bidang Pembinaan Yayasan Gloria, that is Johan Setiawan and friends, especially "Joy" Andrias Harefa who had trained me and Ratna to write daily contemplations a few years ago. Without the training we may never dared to write this book.

This book may not be easy and nice to read without the editing process initiated by Joy and completed by Tina in such a short time, and during their demanding works. Thanks Joy and Tina for your dedication, hard work, and professional editing, although we are just beginners in writing (this is our first time writing a book).

We are so amazed that in less than 9 month this English Edition are ready for publication, because God has moved our dearest sister Magdalena L. Toruan to do the translation with great enthusiasm and how God sent a new friend Ms. Jackie Muaya to edit it with all her heart in His wonderful way.

Our thankfulness also goes to the printing staff of Yayasan Gloria; Mas Anton, Mas Hwiniarto, and the rest, who managed to create such a nice design for the book in such a limited time.

We pray that through this book our efforts will not be futile, because each of its reader will encounter God and grows in knowledge of Him and His love.

Amen!

Jakarta, December 2015 (English Edition)

PREFACE

Written By Stephanus, Yahya's father

I have once proposed this very basic question to many parents: “If as parents you are allowed to choose, which one will you choose: to have a normal child or a deaf child?” I believe you will choose to have normal children, physically and psychologically healthy, smart, pretty and so on. Basically we would wish good things for our children.

We also believe that God is good and - He loves us. But if God is so good, why did He let Yahya, our only son, born deaf? Initially, we felt as if we saw a dark future and problems blocking our way. So, we did try to overcome the challenge by our own strength and might through all the medical knowledge that we had. We tried to find a doctor who we thought will be able to overcome our problem. Yet it was useless. Until eventually we realized that our only help comes from the Lord who created heaven and earth.

Yes, any time that gigantic problem came our way, we could only pray to Him. And there it was, We got the proof that... God is not deaf!

He always answered our cries for help with His miraculous ways. Even when we were in situations where there seemed to be no way out. In His presence there is always a solution – this is what made us marveled at His extraordinary hands at work.

Our experiences with God through our struggle with Yahya had made our life as a family even closer to Him. Yahya's presence had brought lots of blessings to our family. Even, with passing of time, when his sisters were having tests and exams at school, they no longer asked their father – who was then a member of the church elders – to pray for them. They also did not ask prayers from their mother – who was an intercessor at church. But they would ask Yahya to pray for them. When asked why they prefer Yahya to pray for them, simultaneously they replied “Yahya's prayers are more convincing!”

Yet, if we observed, Yahya always prays with very simple words, like “God, tomorrow my sister will have a test... please bless her so that what she has learned will stick like glue so she will not forget. And God, please give her 100 marks!” And God always listens to such simple prayers because God is not deaf!

Through this book, we wish to share with our readers how God has guided, cared for, and shaped Yahya to become a person who totally depends on God and entrusted his life fully upon Him.

Once - during a family retreat, the five of us - me (Stephanus, Yahya's father), Ratna (Yahya's mother), Grace and Lisa (Yahya's sisters) and Yahya - tried to answer the everlasting question : “If we were allowed to choose should we ask Yahya to be born normal or deaf?” In the end we concluded that what God had allowed to happen to Yahya who was born deaf had been an extraordinary blessing for our family, because God is not deaf. Even Yahya himself acknowledged, “I am grateful I was born deaf!”

How can? Why did we reacted that way?

Enjoy reading!

THE CHILDHOOD YEARS

Written by Ratna, Yahya's mother

*And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."
(John 9:2-3 NKJV)*

REALIZING THE DEAFNESS CONDITION

God blessed us with three children. Our first child is a girl, named Grace Suryani. Our second child is also a girl, named Elisabet Listiyani. Both of our girls were born pretty and cute with chubby cheeks. Long before, while we were still dating, we had discussed that two children would be enough for us – either a pair of boy and girl, or both of the same gender would be fine. So we thought two girls were enough. But God had another plan for us. On October 17, 1987, we were blessed with another child, Yahya – a boy. He was born normal, even his weight was ideal – 3.1 kilogram – bigger than his sisters. He was 50 cm long. He was handsome, with fair skin. Our family was so blessed and we were happy.

Yahya grew normal like other children. Yet gradually we began to suspect why Yahya did not like toys that sounded. When Yahya was about 5-6 months old, he always threw away

toys that sounded “icik...icik...” Yahya was a cheerful child. He would laugh aloud when being teased. But until he was 1 year old, not a single word ever came out of his mouth. Even when I tried to teach him simple words like “pa-pa, ma-ma, lam-pu” etc. he did not react at all. Yahya grew very well in motor skill: he was able to sit by himself when he was 7 months old, he could crawl when he was 10-11 months old, and he even walked when he was 1 year old. But when we called his name from his back “Yahya! Yahya!” he never responded.

Initially I thought perhaps because his babysitter who took care of him was too quiet so Yahya was late in speaking. Every time I asked Yahya to drop his laundry into the basket, or to throw garbage in the bin, he would do it right away. As parents, we began to realize that there is something we needed to observe more closely. So I asked a friend at church – a mother who also had a deaf child. She advised me to do a simple test: When Yahya was asleep, I should put an alarm clock and let it rang close to his ear. Did he respond? When I did the test Yahya remained asleep soundly. No reaction at all.



Since then my husband and I began to question “what should we do?” At last we decided to take Yahya to an ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) specialist, and we were suggested to consult a children neurologist. The doctor diagnosed that Yahya had a defect on –his brain, right on the center of the speech nerve. Not only that, Yahya needed to take a listening test at RSCM hospital (The Central Hospital in Jakarta). The result stated that Yahya was heavily deaf – without any further explanation, since we were only given a piece of paper. We were both very shocked, broken hearted and confused to get such a shocking news. It was like hearing a lightning during a broad daylight.

Every day we prayed and cried out to the Lord – we could not accept the reality. However one day God reminded me of John 9:1-3 about a man who was born blind. Whose sin was it that he was born blind. His own sins or his parents’? Jesus answered “His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents’ sins. He is blind so that God’s power might be seen at work in him”. I questioned “what does it mean, Lord?”

My husband and I started to contemplate, was there any sins that we did in the past? I tried to recall what had ever happened. When I was 8 weeks pregnant with Yahya, I suffered a severe influenza. I coughed heavily to the point that I could not speak for 3-4 days. I went to see a doctor and was given flu medicines, cough syrup and Amoxicillin as antibiotic. I did not have fever, and was not infected by Rubella virus. We both started to blame ourselves.

In the midst of these muddled feelings – guilty feelings, sad and confused – my husband was reminded of an old friend, a doctor who was taking a specialist degree at University of Indonesia. We went to see him and told him about Yahya. He suggested that I consulted a neurologist and an ENT specialist at Bethesda hospital in Yogyakarta. We did as he suggested.

The hospital test result declared that Yahya's condition was good. There was no defect on his nerve or brain systems. Even the joints on Yahya's skull bones were good. Yet we still had to follow up with an ENT specialist. Yahya was suggested to do a BERA (Brain Evoked Response Audiogram) test at RSPAD (The Army Central Hospital) in Jakarta.

It was there that we met Doctor Faisa, one of BERA specialist in Indonesia at the time. On July 1989, when Yahya was 19 months old, he underwent the BERA test. Doctor Faisa was the right doctor appointed by God to help us. He explained to us in detail and accurately about Yahya's condition. The result of the BERA test was 95 dB; both right and left ear. That was a serious degree of deafness. But Doctor Faisa also gave us solutions, so we were no longer confused on where to get help. One of the solutions was that Yahya should attend an SLB-B school (a special school for deaf children). If we wish Yahya to have cochlear implant, then we should wait until Yahya was 14 years old, when his skull bones behind his ears no longer grow. We felt a great peace and began to be able to see a future for Yahya. That was God's answer to our prayers.

SCHOOLING AT SANTI RAMA

We began to search for SLB-B for deaf children and enlisted Yahya to Educational Institute for Deaf Children in Wonosobo, Central Java. On July 1989 we got a reply that Yahya was enlisted, but he could only start his schooling when he is 5 years old since it was a boarding school and he would have to stay at the boarding house. At that time Yahya was only 21 months. While waiting for the time to come, God showed us another school, Santi Rama in Central Jakarta. Deaf Children starting from 2 years old and who are ready for school can join.

When Yahya was 20 months old, he took an observation test at Santi Rama. The result showed that Yahya was ready for school because he is quite cooperative, and his understanding and learning abilities was satisfactory. Only his motoric ability needed to be drilled. With such a heavy degree of deafness, that was 95 dB and less than 500Hz range frequency to which Yahya could only respond little. So in June 1989, little Yahya started schooling at Santi Rama Taman Latihan Playgroup.

Yahya's schooling schedule was Monday to Friday 8.00 to 10.00 am. Every morning he was dropped off by his father, but on the way home he took a bus drive, carried by his loving baby sitter. What a struggle for little Yahya. He had to go to school under two years of age. He often cried, wet his pants and far from ability to help himself, but the condition imposed Yahya to start schooling that early.

I was very grateful for God's miraculous help. One of His grace was the gift of a baby sitter who loves Yahya as her own baby : babysitter Mamik who had a nursing background, felt challenged to serve and help Yahya who was deaf. Before Yahya learned to speak he cried a lot because he could not express his wishes. Generally, disabled children tend to be more sensitive,



Yahya greeted to Mrs Sudharmono, Indonesian Vice President's wife, at Santi Rama School

easily disturbed and upset. Yet with genuine care, love and patience, Suster Mamik tried to understand Yahya.

The first lesson at school for Yahya was “Facial Concentration” - That is, Yahya has to concentrate on the faces of his teacher, parents, baby sitter, or whoever that would be communicating with him. Yahya must learn to read the movements of their lips or what is called “lips reading”. Another important lesson was recognizing sources of sounds. Everyday we had to apologize to our neighbors because we had to turn on tape recorder with maximum volume so that Yahya could feel the vibration from the speaker. Yahya often slammed doors so he could hear the sound and also liked banging on pots and pans. He too, loved to shout aloud when he could hear sounds.

Other than “Face Concentration” and “Source of Sounds” recognizing skills, “Candle Blowing” another lesson to learn. This one is useful to help deaf children to draw long breathing so that when they learn to speak, their speech is not broken. So every evening we learned together. Yahya acted as the teacher and we imitated what he displayed of what he learned that day. We were very grateful to get - such dedicated teachers in Santi Rama Playgroup who were so patient toward the children. We, as parents and baby sitter also learned from Yahya’s teachers, whatever they taught Him at school.

Every Saturday Yahya learned from a special tutor who taught him at our home. That way we could learn how-to teach Yahya at home. Unfortunately Yahya did not enjoy the home tutoring. He often left his tutor to play by himself. Though difficult and full of challenges, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday Yahya went to school. That was the gift of ability from our Lord to our boy. He studied at Santi Rama for two years, from June 1989 to June 1991.

PREPARATION FOR SLB-B PANGUDI LUHUR PRIMARY SCHOOL

God went on processing both of us to enter into His plan while raising and educating Yahya. In searching His will for Yahya's education we had been provided with the best solutions. Yahya did not have to go to school in Wonosobo, Central Java because God had provided a school for the deaf in Western part of Jakarta. Yahya started his primary education at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur at the age of 3 years and 9 months. He was accepted as a pre-kindergarten student based on the result of the IQ and Audiogram tests. Every day, from Monday to Friday, Yahya started his class at 07.00 - 15.00. Thus everyday – he still had the chance to spend times with his sisters and parents.

The advantage of studying at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur in Jakarta is that the children will have more time for study under the supervision of talented and experienced teachers while they still staying with their parents. That way the obligations of parents to learn to teach their deaf children can be effectively carried out. On the other hand, parents who sent their deaf children to the school in Wonosobo had their own advantages. The children are more independent and more discipline. The disadvantage is, however, the children become strangers in their own families, and even have more difficulties in communications between children, parents and their siblings.

On his first day at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur, while the students were in the class, the parents were briefed by Father Anton about the teaching methods at the school. Alternately all parents would be given opportunity for an orientation and joined the classes. The learning method at the school is direct oral communication without the use of sign language.

Every Friday there was a special class for the parents about communicating with deaf children orally.

One of the most important and impressive points was when Father Anton mentioned that God created deaf children as beautifully as normal children. Deaf children were like unpolished gems, not nice to look, not valuable. Yet after being consistently polished they would shine as beautiful and valuable gems. Our responsibilities as parents and teachers were to polish those deaf children so that they would grow to become independent, successful and useful persons. For that purpose, the first step to be taken by parents is to accept - their deaf children as God's gift that need to be loved, raised, and cared for, so that they become as valuable as the normal children. Father Anton's speech was a great comfort and strength for us. Our spirit was raised and we began to realize that Yahya was a gift of God which was as valuable as his normal sisters. So I started - learning to pray and be dependent upon our Lord to help us overcome all the challenges we would face in educating Yahya. I was reminded of a verse in the Bible, Ephesians 3: 20 GNB said,

“To Him who by means of His power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever asked for, or even think of.”

So, a new page in our life started, which we named “The struggles at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur” with my heart already accepted Yahya as he was, and no more guilty feelings.

Yahya grew as a cheerful and confident child. We took him with us wherever we went, to church, to the market, to the bank, parties, etc. As parents we never feel ashamed to have a deaf son, because we realize that Yahya is valuable in the eyes of the Lord. Yahya is not a failed or rejected or second quality product as most people think. Rick Warren in his book

Purpose Driven Life wrote that God created humans, each with a purpose. Nothing is created by accident, and that God never fails. The purpose of human creation is to radiate God's love and to glorify Him. Now, for me that was a big AMEN!

LEARNING TO SPEAK

Because deaf children cannot hear, consequently they cannot speak or imitate sounds. That is why the teaching process for deaf children does not start with learning to speak, but to write. Deaf children are considered to have lost two years of language learning opportunities. So, they have to take three years of preparatory schooling or kindergarten, and eight years of preliminary school. So, instead of learning alphabets, Yahya started with vocabularies. And the teachers started teaching with visualization. For instance, Yahya had to bring a certain item to school for his learning object. If Yahya brought a car toy, then the teacher would directly teach the children in the class to write "Yahya's car is red. The car has 4 wheels and 4 doors, etc."

Everyday Yahya had to learn to speak for 15-20 minutes. He entered the Speaking Lab where he had to speak in front of a mirror with a headphone. The teacher also sat with him in front of the mirror. After the student put on the headphone, the teacher started to speak, something like, "maa, maa" with both hands on the cheeks. The student imitated by reading the lips. Speaking lesson was the most difficult and exhausting for Yahya, because one word had to be repeated many times until he could pronounce it correctly. Sometimes his tongue had to be flattened, his lips curved in the right shape, etcetera. One day Miss Eni who taught arithmetic in his class was absent. She was replaced by Miss Mina, who taught speaking lesson. At that time she gave an arithmetic test. Yahya failed to do the

test and he got 'zero' mark.

The next day Yahya got upset and did not want to do the speaking exercise because Miss Mina gave him 'zero' mark. Since then Yahya gave different excuses to avoid speaking exercises, such as going to the toilet, wanted to drink, stomachache, and many more - until the exercise time is over. That way Yahya missed the speaking class. If a student was reluctant to do the speaking exercise for several days, the parents were called to help motivating the child. So as parents we did it so that Yahya would do more exercises. The speaking lesson was definitely the most difficult. For instance, if phoneme "pa" was already formed, phoneme "ma" which had been formed before was soon forgotten, or the other way round. Those speaking teachers like Miss Mina, Miss Mur, Miss Sisil, Miss Wahyu, Father Edel, Miss Isni, and Miss Esti really deserve thumbs up for their patience in coaching the children to speak. God bless them and their families.

When Yahya was in the third grade, he learned to pronounce the consonant R, "er...er...", but he could not do it.. He did try hard but failed. In the speaking lab, in the presence of Miss Mur he prayed, "God, please help me to pronounce er...er..., because if I fail I may not pass the class.... Help me Lord Jesus. Amen." Miss Mur was so moved, she even cried, to see Yahya's seriousness in praying and trying to pronounce the phoneme "er". A few days later Yahya was able to pronounce "er...er." How great is God's love to innocent deaf children like Yahya. They prayed to God and He answered. Since then Yahya prayed every time he faced any problem. Even when he was afraid while lightning struck during the rain or when there were blackouts, or before exams, and during other situation, Yahya always prayed sincerely.

When Yahya was in the fourth grade - meaning he already had struggled and studied at the SLB-B Pangudi Luhur for

seven years - he managed to pronounce all the phonemes. What a long and persistent struggle! Yahya did not only pronounce all phonemes, but he also came out as the second best in poetry reading competition for the 4th grade. All his teachers were very delighted to see the fruits of their hard-struggling efforts. The poetry that Yahya read that day was “Lain Dulu Lain Sekarang” (Different Then, Different Now)

DIFFERENT THEN, DIFFERENT NOW

Then...

When I was born...

I did not hear anything...

Silent..... Silent.....

No sounds...

I look around...

Everything was lovely in my eyes...

But

I couldn't express my feelings...

My tongue was tight

How I wished I could scream...

How I wished I could shout...

How I wished I could call maaaa...

But...

Nothing came out of my mouth...

I saw...

My mom smiling

My daddy laughing...

But ...

their hearts are hurting...

Now....
I can talk...
I can shout....
I can speak...
Screaming... FREEDOM...

Thank you Lord
You sent angels as my teachers
Who taught me...
So now I can do many things...

Jakarta, February 1998
Mrs. Wahyu Rinaningsih

The happiest moment for parents of deaf children was when their child could speak and called them ma...ma...pa...pa... Such things are incredibly valuable for parents of deaf children. So was it for us, parents of Yahya. There were no other words to say but thanks to our Lord and also drops of tears as proof of our deep joyous gratitude when Yahya was able to call us ma...ma, pa...pa.

LEARNING RHYTHM, DANCING AND MUSIC

One rather odd thing that tickled my curiosity during my dedicated time assisting Yahya in his process of learning was when deaf children had to learn about rhythm, dancing and music. How can a deaf child sing? What is the benefit of music lesson?

Yet what I saw later was incredibly marvelous. The teachers who taught rhythm, dancing and music could teach deaf children to dance Javanese dance “Kuda Lumping” (Jumping

Horse), or “Seudati” dance from Aceh, Warrior dance, Peacock dance and other kind of traditional dances. They danced gracefully, just like other normal children. They were even able to play angklung (West Java traditional music instrument made of bamboo) since in the kindergarten.-and played pianica as well in the preliminary school. Through rhythms, dancing and music, deaf children are trained and learned not to be too stiff and be more relax when walking and speaking.

Due to the degree of his deafness, Yahya faced lots of difficulties in detecting the rhythm and genres of music. Music such as dangdut, keroncong, disco and the likes. But he was able to play angklung and pianica. Even students of 6th - 8thgrades were able to play drama, pantomime, etc. That was miraculous, that deaf children can be trained to enjoy arts and develop their talents. It was then that I remembered what was written in Psalms 71:7 KJV,

“I am as a wonder unto many;”

When we carefully observed the development of deaf children’s abilities like Yahya’s, indeed, their life were like miracle proving God’s great and magical works.



Yahya played angklung with school friends



The Celebration of Indonesian's Independency Day

WRITING DIARY

School teachers in Indonesia, either in public or private owned schools, are not used to encouraged their students to write diaries. Thanks to the dedicated teachers of *SLB-B Pangudi Luhur*. Deaf children who are “lacking in language” are encouraged and trained to express their feelings and experiences boldly in diaries.

Initially Yahya did not like to make his own diary and wrote on it daily. He complained that he was exhausted. Thanks to Suster Mamik’s creative efforts and dedication in Yahya’s upbringing. She never got tired persuading Yahya to write his diary. If Yahya complained of being tired, she would say “Just write: I am tired because I get home at 4.30 p.m. Then I take a shower, have dinner, and drink milk at 8.00. Then I go to bed” she suggested. Now that Yahya had started to write his diary, he began to think that he could not write the same stories everyday. It would be boring. Eventually Yahya started to write about what happened at school and on his way to and from school. Suster Mamik then tried to attract Yahya’s attention to what was reported in the newspaper. Things like celebrations of Independence Day and The National Children Day with their competitive games, bus accidents, homeless children who did not go to school, etc. Gradually Yahya got used to the writing activity and began to enjoy reading newspapers. He started with reading TV programs, then the headline news in the papers.

I remember that since our children were still in their kindergarten and preliminary age, every month we took the children -Grace, Lisa, and Yahya- to book shops. Each child may choose two books. One was school books, such as mathematics, science, writing, coloring, sticking etc. The other was whatever story book they liked. They were very

enthusiastic. Initially they had difficulties in choosing since in Gramedia bookshop there were so many kinds of books. Their father used to help them find good and educative story books. We even let them choose illustrative comics. Gradually they developed their love of books more than watching TV. My children only watched certain and special programs on TV (I am very grateful to Miss Tati, Yahya's teacher in the 3rd grade, and Suster Mamik who has helped Yahya to write his diary).

SCHOOL OF LIFE

We were very thankful that through Yahya we had come to know the loving and dedicated teachers of *SLB-B Pangudi Lubur*. They had educated Yahya to write, to speak, to dance, to know music, etc. as I had mentioned before. We believed that Yahya had been educated in "the School of Life" especially since the kindergarten years Yahya had been taught to put on shoes, socks, shirts by himself. He was also encouraged to help himself while eating, playing, tidying up his toys etc. No wonder that since then Yahya had been able to prepare his own clothing, school uniforms, socks and the rest. Even the children were trained in teamwork to take turn in cleaning the classrooms, cleaned the floors, and clear the writing boards.

Having lunch together at school was also an effective way to teach solidarity. The children learned to share, to stand in queues, to eat the same kind of foods, even to take turn in teams washing the dishes. Since Yahya was smaller than most of his friends, he was often given the task of drying the plates, which was quite lot in numbers: 200 plates in average. They did the tasks in teams of 4-5 kids.

Fridays were scheduled for scout training by special instructors. They learned to make rope knots, setting up tents, finding footsteps, cooking - all were actually practiced. Yahya

and his friends even joined the “National Jamboree” in Cibubur. In this “School of Life” he learned to socialize and to get along with teachers, friends, even with students from other schools. Yahya and his friends were once went with their teacher to Puri Market, to the post office, to railway station and took a ride to Bogor. All those wonderful experiences meant a lot to Yahya. Thank you Father Anton, Father Bambang, Father Edel, Sister Sicilia , Ms. Eny, Ms. Taty, Mr. Bowo, Ms. Hartini, Mr. Marno, and Ms. Sri who had educated Yahya with the love of God and prepared Yahya for entering the real life.

As parents, we also developed together with other parents. Often we shared with each other and learned together to overcome problems faced by our children. In every class we had parents who took part as class coordinators. Their task was to buy tissue papers, hand soaps, biscuits as rewards in the speaking labs, and so on. As parents we have to work together closely for the progress of our children.

GROWING WITH FRIENDS

We were created by God as social beings. We need others to grow together. Despite his physical shortcoming, Yahya has some plus points too. He can get along well with his classmates, and with students from other classes as well. Yahya grew in teamwork with his friends through sport activities such as soccer. They spent most of their leisure time playing soccer together.

Yahya loves sports, like badminton, swimming, and soccer. He learned swimming in a swimming school, managed by Dr. Vera. He joined Holiday Class, directly trained by Dr. Vera and her team. , Yahya who was formerly scared of water, was able to swim within only one month time, and was no longer scared. He even managed to learn breast stroke style. Uniquely,

in this swimming school children were only encouraged to play in the water, so swimming class became a pleasure.

When the holiday class was over, Yahya continued with swimming class once a week, so he was able to manage different styles of strokes - breast strokes, back strokes, free strokes, even butterfly strokes. From all he learned, only butterfly strokes he could not master very well because that was the most difficult of all style to master. Swimming was an important sport for deaf children, because when they learned to speak they were required to breathe with their stomach so they could produce long unbroken breath. Yahya took parts in several swimming races too. Though he did not win, the experience to compete with normal children trained his mentality, developing his fighting spirit and sportsmanship in facing competitions and life challenges. Yahya even took lesson on snorkeling as a beginner, with Dr. Vera and Mr. Iwi. Once we went together with them to Sepa Island for snorkeling.



Yahya lined up with his classmates



After swimming class

Through friendship, with our friends, we grew together in other aspects of life too. We believe our experiences brought a great and valuable benefits to Yahya's mental, physical and spiritual life, and to our family life as well..Why spiritual development? Because we always pray together with Yahya to involve God in every important moment in his life such as in sport activities - swimming, snorkeling, etc. For us and for Yahya, our God is not an abstract God, but a real God who exists in our daily life. It was Yahya's presence in our family makes us grow closer and more caring to each other. As what was written in 1 Corinthians 12: 22-23 GNB,

“On the contrary, we cannot do without the parts of the body that seem to be weaker, and those parts that we think aren't worth very much are the ones we treat with greater care, while the parts of the body which don't look very nice are treated with special modesty”.

FAITH THAT DEVELOPED THROUGH BIBLE READING

Written by Stephanus, Yahya's father

Yahya experienced spiritual growth since May 1998. At the time Jakarta was in a scary situation due to social and political turmoil that took place all over the city. However, God used this bad situation to become such an extraordinary blessing for Yahya and the whole family. At that time we did not dare to go out of the house. Schools were closed. It was then that as a father I called for the whole family for to do nightly prayers in the Family Altar.

One day during that month I read the biography of Watchman Nee, a servant of the Lord from Amoy in China

(now Xiamen). Watchman Nee was a very smart son of a rich family. Some of his poetries had been published in the local newspaper during that time. He tended to become an haughty person, and he liked good foods and expensive clothing. Yet his mother was a devoted Christian who feared God and she kept praying for her son's salvation.

One day a servant of God came to the town of Amoy to perform a Revival Service for a few consecutive days. His mother asked Watchman Nee to accompany her to the service. After listening to the news of the Gospel for three days Nee struggled. He knew he had to change his way of life if he wanted to follow God. On the other side he also knew that he would perish if he refused the way of God.

In the midst of his struggle, his mother kept persistently praying for him. Until the end of the third day, Watchman Nee repented and accepted Jesus as his personal God and Savior. Since then his life drastically changed. He faithfully tried to spread the Gospel to his friends. But his friends got bored of him and tried to avoid him. On and on he tried for a year but with no result at all. None of his friends repented and followed the way of Jesus.

Finally Nee went to see a missionary who lived in town. When asked how long he had been following the Lord, he replied one year. Then he was asked how many times he had read the Bible. "Many times", he replied, because he usually opened and read the Bible 3 or 5 times a day. But what the servant of the Lord really meant with "Bible reading" was, reading the Bible from book of Genesis to Revelation. Realizing the fact, Nee openly acknowledged that he had never done that.

The old man nodded his head and said "You have followed God for one year, but you have never finished reading the Bible for once". Watchman Nee was so ashamed to hear that remark. (Frankly speaking I should be more ashamed of

myself. Though I have accept Jesus as my personal God and Savior for more than 22 years - yet not until May 1998 did I finished reading the Bible. In the meantime I had already been involved in different kinds of church activities, even served as an elder. How ashamed I was to think about it).

Back home, Watchman Nee, who then only had the New Testament, started reading and he finished the entire book, from Matthew to Revelation in one week. He did not stop. He kept on reading the New Testament. By the end of that year he already read the New Testament 52 times.

The biography of Nee made me think about reading the Bible until finished. If Watchman Nee could finish it in one week, why couldn't I finish it in 2 weeks, 3 weeks, or if necessary in 4 weeks? Finally, I took the commitment to start with serious Bible Reading like Watchman Nee, starting with The New Testament.

That night during the Family Altar, I shared my commitment with the family. Suddenly Grace, who was then at the second grade of Junior High School said that she too would read the New Testament. So did Lisa, who was in the 6th grade. Even Yahya who was in the 4th grade of SLB-B wanted to read the Bible until finish. (The 4th grade at SLB-B was similar to the 3rd grade in normal public school).

Praise the Lord! In less than one month we all finished reading the New Testament. We then could feel like there was a new revival took place at our home everyday. Our faith grew and flamed up like fire. Since then, as parents, we no longer needed to ask our children whether they had read the Bible because we knew that everyday they read their Bible enthusiastically. What Apostle Paul wrote in Rome 10:17 was very true!

“So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”.

It was only a few years later we realized that Yahya had got a particular experience through the entire New Testament reading process. After completing the reading for the first time, he prayed to Lord Jesus “Lord, now I know You, and I want to follow You!” Yahya prayed that simple prayer by himself, without any body’s assistance. Yet I believed that the Holy Spirit had guided Yahya, and took him to personally met Jesus and experienced a “rebirth”. Hence, Yahya’s spiritual growth flourished.

Other than his daily Bible reading, Yahya also dedicatedly spent time for contemplation. Initially it was indeed difficult at the beginning for him to find the right daily guide for contemplation, but finally he found the right devotional material that suited him. So he grew even more dependently upon the Lord. Whatever problems he faced, he brought them in prayers. And he proved that God always answered his prayers,

And God is not deaf ...

When he was in Senior High School Yahya asked whether he was allowed to read “Da Vinci Code”. A few friends of mine warned me not to let children read “Da Vinci Code” to prevent confusions in their faith. First I was rather doubtful to let Yahya read the book, but I was more concerned of his curiosity that might lead him to -read the book secretly behind my back. Finally I gave him permission to read the book with a consideration that in case he became confused with his faith, I would read the book myself so we could discuss together to restore his belief.

When Yahya finished reading the book, I deliberately asked his opinion. He said “Wow this Dan Brown was a real genius. He did a very intensive and accurate research that he could described his novel realistically.”

“So, what do you think about the story in the novel?”

He answered, “Dan Brown’s opinion was wrong because he described that Jesus was viewed as a man and not as God until the fourth century, when he was made God by the emperor Constantine. Jesus was not necessarily made God because Jesus is God, and I know very well that He is the living God!”

For Yahya, “Jesus is GOD” it is not simply a doctrine or a teaching, but “Jesus is GOD.” that is the living fact he has been experiencing in his daily life for years. Many Christians struggle with the truth of doctrine on “Jesus is GOD”, because they have never met and experience the presence of Jesus personally. No wonder that their faith was easily shaken when faced with such confusing teachings. Therefore, depending on just learning Christian doctrines and teaching is not enough for us, we should experience the truth of the Word of God in our personal life.

FINAL NATIONAL EXAM

Yahya finished his preliminary education at SLB-B Pangudi Luhur in 7 years, instead of 8 years as it is normally scheduled. It was possible for Yahya because he skipped one grade from grade 5 to grade 7. In the 7th grade and the 8th grade class Yahya met Restu and Eka, who then became his close friends and his competitors in study as well.. Though Yahya was the youngest student in his class, he was able to get along well with his classmates who were mostly 2 years older than him. Yahya, Restu, and Eka succeed to managed a healthy competition in their scholar achievements. They studied hard and got the best grades in the class. They were quite close to one another. They tested each other for each subject before doing school exams. The healthy competition improved Yahya’s academic performance. Restu and Eka too

improved as well and became more motivated to be the best.

When Yahya was in the 8th grade (similar to 6th grade at normal public schools), a significant event took place. For the first time, SLB-B Pangudi Luhur primary school joined the Final National Exam. It was in 2001. The result was amazing. Yahya passed with high scores. His total scores were 43.35 out of 50.00 for 5 subjects: PPKN, Indonesian language, Mathematics, IPA (Physical Sciences), and IPS (Social Sciences). Eka got the highest rank and Restu was the second, and Yahya came third. We were very grateful and proud because Yahya had studied with full sincerity and performed very well. It was all because of the grace of our Lord. A year before Yahya finished his primary school, we had already prayed that God would show us which school would be the best for Yahya, according to God's plan. Yes, we did pray a lot through Yahya's struggles.

Another interesting story was about a friend of Yahya named Dwi. Although Dwi studied hard, during tests he often forgot what he had studied. Then Yahya taught Dwi to pray to Lord Jesus. Yahya said "Lord Jesus, please help Dwi to get good marks: 8, 8, 9, 9. Amen." After practicing the prayer that Yahya taught him, Dwi began to get good grades. A few months before Yahya enlisted in a normal public school, God reminded me in a prayer that Yahya would become "a wonder sign" for many people. I really believed that God's plan for Yahya would be fulfilled. I believe in God's word in whatsoever it is.

*"I am as a wonder to many, For You are my strong refuge."
(Psalm 71:7 AMP)*