

# Michael Hung: Finding Faith

*By Ronny Liu*

One of my first memories of Michael Hung was one I did not expect. I was tying my shoes, and before I could even look up, he had already snapped a low resolution, unflattering candid of me. Such an experience is highly representative of the fourth year senior, who has been with Alpha Phi Omega since fall of his freshman year. A picture album titled “First Encounters with Michael Hung” would display a collection of puzzled faces staring awkwardly into the camera. This is the same man who has an album on Facebook of dogs pooping. Indeed, most first impressions of Michael are characterized by humor: he is known for his carefree personality and questionable taste in puns. Yet beneath the veil of humor is an earnest man who has slowly reconciled his beliefs and actions to fit his mold of happiness.

Michael Hung was raised in San Diego, California. Born into a Christian family, Michael’s faith was a matter of importance beginning from a young age. His ancestors hailed from China, where his great grandfather was converted by a missionary. That same faith was carried on by Michael’s grandfather (who was imprisoned as a missionary) as well as Michael’s parents, who later immigrated to the United States.

“I’ve been going to church for as long as I can remember.”

Every Sunday morning, without fail, Michael Hung can be found at Grace Community Church, located roughly 15 miles away from UCLA. There he has established a family away from home. The church places emphasis on its community, which to the members suggests both genuine fellowship within the church family and an open door to those around them.<sup>1</sup> Michael is also involved in Grace on Campus at UCLA, the college ministry of Grace Community Church. There he has built strong relationships with many members. These are the people whom Michael confide in and trust the most.

Church has always been a mysterious concept to me, an immigrant whose parents hardly even mentioned the notion of religion as I was growing up. At one point in my preadolescence, I wondered why so many people always flocked to a peculiar building embedded with a cross every Sunday morning. For the longest time, I was convinced that there must have been a giant buffet inside, and that the food was free. Even now, at a more understanding age, I struggle with deciphering the differences between certain sects and beliefs of a given religion. Michael patiently explained to me particular nuances of Christianity, including the differences between different schools and modes of thought. But for Michael, what kind of Christian he is wasn’t always clear.

“I remember my freshman year, I would go to parties and just drink, never really thinking about what I was doing.”

Certain Christians believe in certain ideals, and the choices a Christian makes is interpreted uniquely by each individual Christian. There is no one, strict, defined way to live as a Christian, because there are different ways that one can interpret the Bible. For example, there is the question of whether it is fine for a Christian to drink. Some interpret it as okay to do so after

reaching the legal age, while others adhere strictly to a no-drinking policy. Michael's big realization came when someone approached him about his drinking practices.

"I remember I was drinking Mike's Hard Lemonade or something, and then someone came up to me and said, 'What kind of Christian are you being if you're drinking?' Those words hit me pretty hard. If someone who isn't even a Christian can tell that you're doing something contradictory to your religion, then you know something is wrong."

After reevaluation, Michael decided to stop underage drinking. It was not so much because he believed drinking was a bad thing, but because he did not want to be someone who made excuses. He did not want to become someone who twisted and changed his tenets to fit his lifestyle. As someone is non-religious, I deeply respect that.

Contrary to stereotypical views of some religious people, Michael Hung is a rationale thinker who embraces forward thinking. The strict truths and non-truths of the Bible are not his primary focus. Debates about the validity of biblical events and questions about historical accuracies are irrelevant to the purpose of faith.

"I believe in what I do because I've seen what it can do for people. I've seen people change for the better."

In other words, Michael's faith gives him sustenance and hope.

From a non-biased viewpoint, religion is truly polarizing. In some places it serves as a harbor of hope, in others it is the catalyst for waves of violence. Yet the intentions are inherently good, and the resulting interpretations place religion in one boat or the other. If anything, Michael has learned to swim in the right places.

I wrote this article not to advocate for religion or to go against it, but as a way to offer a different perspective. Especially at a school as large as UCLA, we are bound to come across many people with different beliefs and lifestyles than us. To ignore these differences would be perpetuating a myopic attitude. To embrace these differences is to make the world a better place, which is what Michael strives to do.

Now on the verge of graduation from UCLA, Michael will be attending the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine this upcoming fall. As he approaches this next chapter in his life, he has found faith in himself.

"Right now, I'm content with my life. I really am."

## Notes

1. "Grace Community Church." About. Accessed April 14, 2015.  
<http://www.gracechurch.org/About>.

**\*Disclaimer\*** Any and all opinions, including areas of positive or negative portrayal, were made through author interpretation, and do not necessarily represent the views of Michael Hung. Some quotes were reproduced from memory and may not be exact.