

Is Michael Vick a Christian?

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NFL quarterback Michael Vick served a twenty-one month prison term for heavy involvement in dog-fighting. Here's what Vick said in his apology to the public: "I'm upset with myself and, you know, through this situation I found Jesus and asked Him for forgiveness and turned my life over to God. I think that's the right thing to do as of right now."

About 3 years later, with former NFL coach Tony Dungy next to him, Vick spoke to a large audience and said, "Pre-incarceration, it was all about me. When I got to prison, I realized I couldn't do it anymore. The one thing I could rely on was my faith in God . . . Five months ago I was worried with what was going to happen, but now I'm more at peace. God has taken it over. I don't have to worry about being dynamic. God is in control of that."¹



What do those quotes reveal about Michael Vick? Is he a Christian? He didn't quite say things perfectly, but he may be a Christian. When I was a young believer, I'm sure I didn't communicate the gospel's impact on my life as clearly as I could have, but my faith was sincerely in Jesus Christ as Savior, I believed that He was risen from the dead, and I followed Him.

You might be able to convince everyone that you are a Christian with your ability to accurately articulate the gospel. But just as saying some things a little off doesn't mean Michael Vick isn't a Christian, saying things correctly doesn't mean you are.

How can you know if you are truly a Christian? Examine if God has given life to your dead soul (regeneration). Paul said in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive* together with Christ" (emphasis mine).

How can we know if God has given life to our dead souls? How can we know if we have been regenerated?

Consider Lydia (Acts 16:11-15, 40). About the only thing Lydia had in common with Michael Vick is it seems she was fairly well-to-do. She was a

"seller of purple fabrics" (v.14), which probably meant that her clientele included royalty. We know for sure that Lydia was given life from God. We're not given all of the details, but we know that Paul (or perhaps one of his companions) preached the gospel to Lydia and the other women by the river, and God, by His sovereign Spirit, gave life to Lydia's dead soul. Lydia's heart was closed to the gospel, but "the Lord opened her heart" (v. 14).

Lydia then demonstrates that God had given her life. Note three evidences of regeneration in her life, and ask yourself, "Is this true of me? Has God given life to my dead soul?"

First, *Lydia responded to the gospel by trusting in Jesus Christ*. Acts 16:14 says, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul," and then in verse 15 Lydia was baptized, which in Acts always follows faith in Christ. Faith must not be defined as a correctly worded prayer or a walk to the front of a building at the end of a sermon. Faith involves understanding and believing certain facts about Jesus (specifically, his sinless life, death as a wrath-bearing substitute for sinners, and resurrection) and trusting in Him for salvation.

Second, *Lydia obeyed Christ and was baptized*. Whatever your view is about baptism, apostolic preaching included the call to be baptized (see Acts 2:38). Paul did not have to chase Lydia around Philippi trying to convince her to be baptized. Once God gives someone life, they hear Christ's voice as Scripture is read or taught, and they do what He says—they gladly follow Christ (John 10:27). True believers have been made new and the Holy Spirit indwells them producing fruit in their lives. They still sin, but they are repenters at heart.

Third, *Lydia loved and served the church*. Luke reports that Lydia "urged us saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us" (Acts 16:15). The last verse of Acts 16 reveals that Lydia's house became the meeting place for the church in Philippi. She was now committed to her fellow believers and the advancement of the gospel. John writes, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14).

Michael Vick may be a Christian—time will reveal the truth. Lydia was a Christian. What about you? Has God given you life? Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation? Do you obey Christ? Do you love the church?

¹ Both quotes are taken from an article by Mark Bergin, "God is in Control," located at www.worldmag.com.