

Like Mike

Much like other boys growing up in the 90's, I was obsessed with being like Michael Jordan. Hours spent in the driveway imitating his last second shots. Wheaties for breakfast, Gatorade to rehydrate, and yes, maybe even Hanes for my underwear 😊. But nothing compared to my love for his Nike Air Jordan shoes.

In the recently released movie, *Air*, the story about how Nike landed Jordan's shoe endorsement deal, actor Jason Bateman says, "A shoe is always just a shoe, until someone steps into it." Metaphorically speaking, I had visions of becoming Michael Jordan through stepping into his shoes.

While I would eventually own several pairs of Air Jordan's, I have never forgotten the feeling of disappointment and embarrassment when instead of getting a pair of Nike Air Jordan 4's like my friends, my cost-conscious parents took me shopping, and I got the look alike brand. Nothing against look alikes, but as an impressionable nine-year-old boy, it just wasn't the same. For good and bad, this was a defining moment in my young life. At that moment, I vowed that, when I got older, I would never be in a position where I was unable to afford the things I wanted.

Fortunately, I have been blessed beyond what I deserve, and have been able to keep that vow that I made 33 years ago. But as a result, that blessing has created another dilemma. A 'tension' if you will. **When is enough, enough?** Where do I draw the line on my spending limits? How do I avoid becoming materialistic, remaining true to my humble upbringing, all while enjoying the blessings God has given?

This ongoing 'tension' is one I often find myself wrestling with, and one that was recently on my mind when Ben, our 14-year-old son, wanted me to buy a pair of retro Air Jordan 4's – yes, the exact same shoe from my childhood that was the foundation of my vow. Ben's passion for basketball is easily equal to mine at his age; he couldn't understand why I was reluctant to spend money on those shoes. What he couldn't have understood or appreciated is that I was again feeling trapped in the 'tension'. Can you relate? Have you asked yourself one of these questions lately?

- Do I buy a new car?
- Do I spurge on a vacation?
- Do I upgrade my phone?
- Do I get a streaming service subscription?

The list is never ending. Not that there's anything wrong with these luxuries, but when I reflect on how for the majority of my childhood, we did without simple things like cable TV and central air conditioning, I ask myself, "Don't I already have more than I need?"

While I am a far cry from being an expert on this topic, I would humbly submit the answer is not, "As long as you can afford it, you should purchase it." This is a slippery slope that can lead to making materialism an idol in your life. Therefore, a few years ago when wrestling with this 'tension' related to a purchase I was considering, I resonated with the advice from a good friend and mentor:

- Test your motivations.
- **Ask yourself: "How would I feel if this was taken away?"**
- If you ever feel that losing the item would be hard, then you could be at risk of making the item an idol in your life.

The irony is that early on in my life, Michael Jordan was my idol. And if I am being honest, so were his shoes. Therefore, my motivation at nine years of age was unhealthy. Today, the retro Air Jordan 4's is just another pair of shoes that represent a piece of my past. Therefore, I made the purchase. And although I wish I didn't agonize so much over the decision, I believe the 'tension' is a positive indicator that I have not forgotten my roots.

INTENTIONAL LIVING CALL TO ACTION: The next time you are considering a meaningful purchase, test your motivations. Ask yourself, “How would I feel if this was taken away?”