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The Lowedown

As a die-hard Laker fan, this summer certainly has been a disappointment.

It started when the Lakers were thoroughly dismantled by a much smaller, but more physical Detroit Pistons team. The Lakers lost the championship that most had conceded to them last summer when they signed future Hall of Famers Karl Malone and Gary Payton as free agents.

After the series ended, the Lakers imploded. Phil Jackson, arguably the greatest NBA coach ever was not resigned and Shaquille O'Neal, the self-proclaimed "Most Dominant Ever" demanded a trade, saying that he wanted to be a part of a "team".

Kobe Bryant, the cocky youngster that made up the 3rd member of the Laker "trinity", opted out of his contract. Most interpreted this to be a move aimed at forcing the Lakers to dump Phil and Shaq, with whom it was reported that Kobe was at odds.

Shaq's trade demands were finally honored in a controversial trade with the Miami Heat and Pat Riley, who just two weeks previously had talked to the Lakers about their head coaching vacancy.

The very next day, Kobe Bryant announced that he had decided to resign with the Lakers for the maximum contract amount allowable.

A few days later, Shaq (nicknamed "The Diesel") arrived in Miami in a Diesel truck and was given the keys to the city. He was given a hero's welcome and he promised to personally deliver a championship to South Beach.

Fans, writers and sports anchors alike have pontificated endlessly about the reasons for the breakup of

this highly successful triangle.

Many say it's Kobe's fault. Some say it's Jerry Buss's fault (the owner). A few say it's Shaq's fault.

As hard as it is for me to see this championship caliber squad dismantled, I think there is a valuable lesson that can be learned and applied.

In a team sport like basketball, nothing is ever accomplished by one player. Even Michael Jordan needed Scottie Pippen, several good role players and a new coach (Phil Jackson) before the Bulls ever won anything.

As good as Shaq is, it is a bit arrogant, in my opinion, to promise a championship with a team for which you've never played. If you could not win a championship the past two years with arguably the best coach and one of the best players on your team, what makes you think that you can deliver a championship with a team for which you've never played?

How does this relate to us? In ministry, nothing is ever accomplished solely because of the efforts of one individual.

Often times, I'm tempted to take credit for the many positive things that have happened or are happening in our ministry.

I fool myself into believing that it's my strategies, or my abilities that have made the difference. I even sometimes begin to think that I could duplicate "my" successes in other places where ministries have not been as successful.

This is the height of pride and arrogance and Scripture is clear that those who would elevate themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted.

The Laker trinity failed because it really wasn't a trinity. The word trinity comes

from the words "tri" (three) and "unity". It's a tri-unity.

Within the Holy Trinity, there is perfect unity. The Son is not secretly jealous of the Father, nor does the Spirit demand more attention than the Son.

In fact, within the trinity, there is submission and even deference.

Philippians 2.6-7 says that Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

By humbling Himself, Jesus was exalted by the Father so that His name is above every other name.

The Bible also indicates that one of the chief roles of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus (see John 16.14).

Can you imagine if Kobe, Shaq and Phil had made more of an effort to emulate the example of the Holy trinity?

Perhaps they would have won 10 championships in a row. And even if they didn't win it all every year, I'm certain there would have been a lot less finger pointing and back biting.

In my own life, I know that I have been blessed by many things—a great family, fabulous student leaders and many wonderful ministry partners who are praying for us and the students to whom we minister.

The amazing things that have happened in our ministry are the result of the efforts of many people, but ultimately, it is God Himself who deserves the credit!

Thank you for your partnership and your encouragement. You are making an eternal impact in the lives of students who are in turn influencing the world!