

Series: For the Kingdom

Lesson 3: Safe Havens

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Examine their own group culture and decide in what ways it is welcoming to others and in what ways it is not
- Decide one or two changes that they could make to their group culture to make it a better embassy for God

Materials Needed:

- ☐ DVD copy of *Casino Royale*
- ☐ Board and markers

Lead In:

Tell the students that they are going to watch a short clip from the movie *Casino Royale*. Ask students to watch and identify where the character Mollaka goes and why he goes there. Tell them that Mollaka is the African man that can run; that should be enough to identify him. Show the clip in chapter 3 that begins at 12:30 minutes with an explosion and ends at 16:22 minutes when Mollaka enters the embassy. If you have time, you may want to show the entire chase scene, as it is a good one (but unnecessary for the lesson). The entire chase scene is the whole of chapter 3 (09:35 to 16:22).

The answer to the question is that he goes to an embassy. Why is that? Perhaps one of your students will know that embassies are considered extraterritorial areas. The word isn't important but the idea is that the laws of the host country don't necessarily apply in the embassy as much as the laws of the diplomatic country. In other words, if you're on vacation in Japan and there's a problem, you can go to the Canadian Embassy looking for safety. So in the movie, the guy runs to the embassy hoping to take refuge from Bond in a place where he thinks he will be safe. Well, it's Bond so his plan doesn't work, but the point is that embassies are supposed to be safe places for people to take refuge.

Ask, *Does anyone remember what we talked about last lesson?* The answer is embassies, ambassadors, representing God, and so on. So if we are God's ambassadors, I guess this group/church is God's embassy. Today we are going to have a look at our embassy and decide in what ways it is and isn't a place where people can take refuge.

Task One:

Ask students, *How many of you are on Facebook? How about MySpace? What is the point of those websites?* Solicit answers. While several answers are possible to this last question, look for an answer such as "MySpace allows you to express who you are" or something similar. Tell students that in the same way that individuals have identities and

make MySpace or Facebook pages to show those identities to others, groups have identities too and this group is going to work together to create a MySpace/Facebook page.

Task Two:

Ask for a volunteer to record the group's answers on the board. Now ask the group to brainstorm a list of things that make up the identity of the group. For example, does your group always go out for ice cream after every single event? That's important. Put that on the board. Is your group multi-cultural? Does it have lots of leaders? Do you love to do things outdoors? What else is special, unique, interesting, difficult, or generally true about your group? What are you all about? What would a new person think of the group? For this task, it is appropriate to include things that are not-so-flattering about your group. Aim for at least a dozen characteristics. Students may have a hard time thinking in this corporate way since we are conditioned to think only about our individual identities. This is part of the challenge of this lesson.

If you have a creative group, you can lay out your answers like a MySpace or Facebook page, draw them, or really make a webpage. Make that decision based on your group and your resources. The point isn't the format so much as working together to define the values and identity of the group.

Task Three:

Ask the students to think back to the character of Mollaka in *Casino Royale*. He was running towards the embassy because the embassy offered him safety. Ask students, *If we are like God's embassy, what do you think would compel people to run, or walk, or stagger, or leap, into our group?* Solicit answers and probe for depth. Answers may

include things such as: people are looking for community, they have spiritual questions, they want to worship God, they are new in town, they have pain in their lives.

Say something like, *For the rest of the time, I want you to imagine those people who are or might be running towards us for safety, belonging, answers, comfort, and so on. We are going to do some hard work analyzing our group culture to find out how a person like that would feel arriving here.*

Task Four:

Say something like, *Okay, so if people are looking for something that they need and want and they come here to our group, what will they think? Think back to the time when you were checking out the group, whether that was five years ago or whether it's today! Have a look at the list we made and decide what are the three things that would be most welcoming to someone who is looking for something here?*

Now, brace yourselves for gracious honesty and decide what are the three things that might make someone not feel very welcome or comfortable in your particular group. And I really do mean brace yourselves. You will need to frame this by saying that the point isn't to find blame or whine about the things you want changed. Whatever the problem is, agree to share responsibility for it. Don't think of yourselves but of the people who come looking for something within the group. What would be off-putting to *those* people? Cliquiness? Exclusive events? Too much confusing Christian lingo? What else?

Task Five:

Now that students have defined the identity of their group and decided what is most welcoming and least welcoming about it, ask students to work together to decide one or two things that they could actually *do* to make the youth group a safer, more welcoming place for people who are looking for something. These ideas should be practical and someone should be willing to do them. Decide what they are, who will do them, how they will get done, and so on.

Closing:

Close by praying for people who are running towards God, that they would find themselves in God's embrace.