



**A chance to watch films together.  
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.  
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

**5th Feb Grace is gone**  
**4th Mar Tokyo Story**  
**1st Apr He who must die**  
**6th May The Help**  
**10th Jun A Separation**  
**1st Jul The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**

**Films start at 5:30pm  
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

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## Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if only we take time to look.

### **Questions to ask yourself**

- ▶ What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?
- ▶ Which incidents made you think or feel most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?
- ▶ What issues did the film raise for you?
- ▶ What character(s) do you most identify with and why?
- ▶ Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

### **Some facts about the film**

- ▶ Kathryn Stockett's book on which this film is based was the author's first novel and took five years to complete. It was rejected 60 times before it was eventually published.
- ▶ Octavia Spencer won both an Oscar and a BAFTA this year for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for her performance of Minny. The film was also nominated for three other Oscars - Best Actress (Viola Davis as Aibileen), Best Supporting Actress (Jessica Chastain as Celia Foote) and Best Film.
- ▶ A longtime friend of the author, Kathryn Stockett, Octavia Spencer actually provided the inspiration for the character of Minny in the novel and voiced her in the audiobook version. Octavia's own mother was a maid.
- ▶ The film was written and directed by Stockett's childhood friend, Tate Taylor, who optioned film rights to the book before its release.
- ▶ Medgar Evers, whose assassination is portrayed in the film, was a civil rights activist and became a field secretary for the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery before a crowd of 3,000 people. Although Byron De La Beckwith was brought to trial for the murder, the jury (consisting entirely of white men) twice failed to come to a verdict and the case was dropped. In 1994, thirty years later, the case was reopened following new evidence and Beckwith was convicted. He died in prison in 2001 following an unsuccessful appeal.

## Memorable Quotes

- Aibileen** I was born 1911, Chicksaw County, Piedmont Plantation.  
**Woman** And did you know as a girl growing up that one day you'd be a maid?  
**Aibileen** Yes ma'am, I did.  
**Woman** And you knew that because...  
**Aibileen** My mama was a maid. My grandmama was a house slave.  
**Woman** *[whispering as she writes down]* "house slave..." Did you ever dream of being something else?  
*[Aibileen nods yes]*
- Woman** What does it feel like to raise a white child when your own child's at home being looked after by somebody else?
- Aibileen** You is kind. You is smart. You is important.
- Stuart** Isn't that what all you girls from Ole Miss major in - professional husband hunting?
- Charlotte** Courage sometimes skips a generation. Thank you for bringing it back to our family.
- Hilly** They carry different diseases than we do. That's why I've drafted the Home Health Sanitation Initiative.
- Skeeter** The what?  
**Hilly** A disease-preventative bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the coloured help. It's been endorsed by the White Citizen's Council.
- Skeeter** Maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly.
- Constantine** *[to Eugenia]* Every day you're not dead in the ground, when you wake up in the morning, you're gonna have to make some decisions. Got to ask yourself this question: "Am I gonna believe all them bad things them fools say about me today?" You hear me today? "Am I gonna believe all them bad things them fools say about me today?" You hear me today? All right? As for your mama, she didn't pick her life. It picked her. But you, you're gonna do something big with yours. You wait and see.
- Aibileen** I ain't never had no white person in my house before.
- Mae Mobley** You my real mama, Aibi.
- Stuart** I've never met a woman that says exactly what she's thinking.  
**Skeeter** Well, I got plenty to say.
- Aibileen** *[to Hilly]* All you do is scare and lie to try and get what you want.
- Aibileen** God says we need to love our enemies. It hard to do. But it can start by telling the truth. No one had ever asked me what it feel like to be me. Once I told the truth about that, I felt free.
- Minnie** Fried chicken just tend to make you feel better about life.

# The Help

Today's film is the Oscar winning "The Help" (12A). Set in Mississippi in the 1960s, it tells the story of a southern society girl who returns from college determined to become a writer. Sickened by the way her friends treat their coloured maids, she decides to write a book detailing the maids' point of view with regard to the white families for which they work, and the hardships they have to endure on a daily basis. The results cause uproar.

This moving film gives a fascinating insight into 1960s small-town America as well as raising continuing questions about discrimination and the way we treat people. It also prompts us to ask how we might respond in a similar situation and what prejudices we might be blind to.

## **Courage in the face of adversity**

It takes a lot of courage to rock the boat and sometimes people's efforts will go unrewarded. There are many stories of "whistleblowers" who have discovered that no one wants to hear what they have to say. In 1960s America, the tide of civil rights was slowly moving, but there remained many people who didn't want things to change, particularly in the Southern States. To take a stand against discrimination in such circumstances takes real courage. Although in the film it is never entirely clear that Skeeter understands the risks, the coloured maids certainly do. How do you think you would react in a similar situation? Would you "rock the boat" or would you want to keep your head down?

## **Blinkered vision**

It is easy to look back and shake our heads in disbelief at the way people were treated. Yet many of the white people involved simply didn't realise anything was wrong or understand the issues. That was the way things were - the way they had always been. And many might go on to say, that is the way things were meant to be. Are there things about which we are similarly blinkered? And, if so, how might we recognise them?

## **Childcare**

One of the issues raised in the film is the way children are always being raised by someone other than their parents (or, in particular, mothers). The white women hand that side of things over to their maids so that they can continue to enjoy their particular lifestyle; the maids hand on the care of their own children to others so that they can go out to work. Things may no longer be split on coloured lines, but how much are things really different today? How important is it for children to be brought up by their own parents? And what does that say about a society where increasingly both parents are having to work?

## **Combating stereotypes**

Throughout the film, Aibileen does her best to inculcate the right attitudes in the children she cares for, always affirming them for who they are, and encouraging them to look beyond colour to the person beneath. Affirming and valuing each other as a child of God is an essential part of our faith and witness. How good are we at doing this in practice?