



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

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

**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

- ▶ The film won the 2012 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and was also nominated for Best Original Screenplay.
- ▶ The film has been showered with other awards, too, including the BBC 4 World Cinema Award for Best Film. It won three Bears at the Berlin International Film Festival, the first film ever to do so.
- ▶ The director's daughter, Sarina Farhadi, plays Termeh, the eleven-year-old daughter of Nader and Simin, in the film. She shared the Best Actress (ensemble) Award at the Berlin International Film Festival.
- ▶ In September 2010, Farhadi was banned from making the film by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, because of an acceptance speech held during an award ceremony where he expressed support for several Iranian film personalities. Notably he had wished to see the return to Iranian cinema by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, an exiled filmmaker and Iranian opposition profile, and the imprisoned political filmmaker Jafar Panahi, both of whom had been connected to the Iranian Green Movement. The ban was lifted in the beginning of October after Farhadi claimed to have been misperceived and apologized for his remarks.
- ▶ Most of the movie was shot using a handheld camera.
- ▶ In the opening credits, the two ID cards being photocopied belong to Hedyeh Tehrani and Hamid Farokhnezhad, the two actors who played a couple heading for divorce in Farhadi's previous film *Fireworks Wednesday*.

## Memorable Quotes

- Nader**      What is wrong is wrong, no matter who said it or where it's written.
- Nader**      I went there because I have a sense of humanity.  
**Hodjat**      Where was your sense of humanity when you were hitting her ?
- Simin**      He doesn't even know who you are.  
**Nader**      He does not know me but I know that he is my father.
- Termeh**      Didn't you say it wasn't serious?  
**Nader**      It got serious.
- Hodjat**      You know, my problem is that I can't speak like them.
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### Conflicting loyalties

Simin wants to leave the country because she believes that is what's best for her daughter. Nader cannot leave the country because of his commitment to look after his father. How do we reconcile the irreconcilable? It can be easier when the sacrifices we have to make are our own, but when they involve our responsibilities towards other people it becomes much more difficult. What would you have done in Simin and Nader's situation?

### Being equal

As Christians, we regularly affirm that we are all equal before God, that everyone is made in his image, and that all are loved and precious in his sight. Our challenge as disciples is to live as though that was the case. Hodjat certainly feels that the system is against him. From a lower class and without the eloquence of Nader, he is convinced he will not get a fair hearing. Do you think he is right? How do we ensure that in our churches everyone feels welcome and at ease even if they come from a different background to the majority?

### Flawed humanity

The most compelling thing about the film is the way all the characters are flawed, and thus all ring true. Nader is a family man who loves his father and his daughter, but commits perjury, is stubborn and arrogant and asks his acquaintances to lie. Simin uses the secret that Razieh told her in order to try and manipulate the situation to her advantage. Termeh lies to save her father from justice. Razieh is religious and worried about Allah and sins, but nonetheless is still capable of lying, fearing the reaction of her husband. Hodjat is a rude and impulsive man who can be violent, yet gains some sympathy from the way he is being hounded by creditors. The judge, too, has his own agenda, constrained by the law. In such a situation, where do you see God at work? Is there some message of hope amongst all the manipulation and deceit? What might the characters learn from their experiences?

## A Separation

This film, directed by Asghar Farhadi, is a melodrama that captures the theme of responsibility and honesty as well as love, religiosity, and sacrifice. Nader and Simin have been married for 14 years and live with their 11-year-old daughter Termeh in Tehran. The family belongs to the urban upper middle-class and the couple is on the verge of separation. Simin wants to leave the country with her husband and daughter, as she does not want Termeh to grow up under the prevailing conditions. Nader, however, is concerned for his elderly father, who lives with the family and suffers from Alzheimer's disease. When Nader decides to stay in Iran, Simin files for divorce. The family court judges the couple's problems insufficient to warrant divorce and rejects Simin's application.

Simin still wants to leave the country, but not without her daughter, a somewhat shy, bespectacled 11-year-old who cannot accept her parents' break-up and decides to stay with her father. Simin temporarily goes to stay with her mother, thereby forcing Nader to hire someone to take care of his father during the day. A colleague of Simin recommends the pregnant Razieh. Being deeply religious, Razieh feels she should not work alone in a house with a single man, but her husband has been out of a job for a long time and is threatened with jail by his creditors. When Nader comes home one day to find his father left alone and tied to his bed, a struggle with the returning Razieh ensues, with catastrophic consequences for everyone around. Soon, Nader finds himself entangled in a web of lies, manipulation and public confrontations.

*"Just when it seemed impossible for Iranian filmmakers to express themselves meaningfully outside the bounds of censorship, Asghar Farhadi's A Separation comes along to prove the contrary. Apparently simple on a narrative level yet morally, psychologically and socially complex, it succeeds in bringing Iranian society into focus for in a way few other films have done."*

(Deborah Young of The Hollywood Reporter)

### Religious Conviction

At one point in the film, Razieh rings a religious helpline asking whether she is allowed to change Nader's father after he has wet himself or whether it would be a sin. What do you say to those whose religious conviction may lead them to behave in a way you would find difficult?

### Lying for others

Nader feels the need to be economical with the truth because he doesn't believe "the system" will understand. In his own mind, he knows what he did was wrong but rationalises it in terms of, in the heat of the moment, forgetting that Razieh was pregnant. Unfortunately, he doesn't think the judge will be so understanding and he cannot afford to go to prison because of the need to look after his father. Meanwhile, Termeh feels the need to support her father out of love for him. Is it ever right to lie on someone else's behalf?