

## Movie discussion resource **Breaking Bread (2020)**

**Engage with culture without disengaging your faith.**

**Genre:** Documentary

**Rating:** M (coarse language)

**Length:** 1 hour 25 minutes

**Starring** Dr Nof Atamna-Ismaeel, Shlomi Meir, Ali Khattib

**Writer/Director:** Beth Elise Hawk

**Release date in Australia:** June 3, 2021



### **Brief synopsis**

A feel-good foodie documentary featuring Dr. Nof Atamna-Ismaeel - the first Muslim Arab to win Israel's MasterChef. She is an Israeli citizen, and speaks both Arabic and Hebrew. She is on a quest to make social change through food. And so, she founded the A-sham Arabic Food Festival in Haifa, Israel, with pairs of Arab and Jewish chefs collaborating on traditional fare from the Levant, the area that includes Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. The documentary says Arab, not Palestinian, because some of the Muslim chefs are not Palestinian but from other Arab countries. The food includes dishes like kishek (a Syrian yogurt soup), and qatayef (a dessert typically served during Ramadan). The goal is to unite Arabs and Jews over their shared love of cuisine, and invite diners to try dishes not familiar to them. The film is a gourmet guide to the disparate historical shifts that have gone into the making of the country's multi-faceted population. It is an engrossing film about hope, synergy and mouth-watering fare, with entertaining personalities. It showcases the surprising diversity of views and peoples in Israel. But it is really about more than food, it is about crossing cultural divides through cooking - and enjoying delicious dishes. The film illustrates what happens when people focus on the person, rather than religion; on the public, rather than the politicians.

'Hummus has no borders'.

'There is no room for politics in the kitchen'.

### **Questions for discussion**

*Some general questions might provide enough framework for you to discuss the movie, such as:*

- ❖ What did you love about this movie? What were the highlights?
- ❖ What themes were explored?
- ❖ What assumptions were embedded in the story?
- ❖ What challenged you? What questions did it raise for you?
- ❖ Are there aspects of the story that resonated with your own experience?
- ❖ Are there biblical or theological themes or characters that come to mind?

### **Eating at table together**

Jesus was guest at many tables, sharing surprising company with the "wrong" sort of people. In the culture in which Jesus lived, to share a meal with someone meant sharing their reputation, linking yourself with them before society and God. In the Gospels, the religious leaders' most common complaint against Jesus was this: that he ate with tax collectors and sinners\* (ie those who were labelled by the religious authorities as outside the boundaries of acceptability).

=> What biblical stories come to mind that happen around a meal?

=> Share your experiences eating meals with people from different cultural backgrounds. If this hasn't been your experience, what do you imagine would be the challenges, and joys?

=> how is food a 'bridge' that transcends political and religious divides?

## **Identity**

Culture is the shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses, place of birth, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviors, art, literature, music - and food. Culture includes learned patterns of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Each of us has personal, social, and cultural identities.

=> How defined/confined is identity based on on these things?

=> What are the challenges to offering generous, inclusive and hospitable space that values diversity and difference, and builds courageous communities committed to truth-telling, grace, hope, and love?

## **Draw the circle wide**

These words by Gordon Light:

*Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.*

*Let this be our song: no one stands alone.*

*Standing side by side, draw the circle, draw the circle wide...*

Movie quote: 'This is what's missing - we don't know each other enough'

Movie quote: 'The difference between strangers and enemies is too small'

=> How do you go about widening your circles of friendship? Should there be 'circles' at all?

## **Eric Law: Finding Intimacy in a World of Fear**

Eric Law postulates that since 9/11 we live in a climate of fear. He explores his own personal "journey through this landscape of fear" with the hope of helping others get a "handle" on ways to achieve intimacy in spite of the prevalence of fear.

\* The climate of fear destroys trust

\* Lack of trust reduces life to risk management (a reactive process)

\* Life as risk management destroys intimacy

\* Lack of intimacy destroys the primary support for facing fears: community

\* Community requires the presence of vulnerability and truth telling

=> What is your own narrative through this 'landscape of fear' in which we find ourselves?

Can you identify 'sticking points'?

## **Food**

Movie quote: 'I think they should have given chefs to make peace in the world'

Movie quote: 'Food can bring us together. Food can be the first step'

Movie quote: 'You're gonna use food to bring world peace. No, I'm going to use food to change a few people, that's it. But if you change a few people and other people would do the same, then maybe we will succeed together to do some kind of a huge change'

"Food may not be the answer to world peace, but it's a start." (Anthony Bourdain)

=> Imagine global leaders making and sharing meals together before they begin political conversations. How might that influence the dynamics of global politics?

=> how might hosting and sharing a meal with people from other cultural backgrounds 'widen the circle' and contribute to the greater good in the world?

## **Politics (by absence)**

None of the chefs come from the West Bank and it goes without saying that there can be none from the Gaza Strip, although one chef makes a wistful reference to a dessert served at Gaza weddings. The politics in Israel and Palestine are complex, heart breaking, divisive, deadly. And yet Gaza is more than a troubled war zone - people have homes, cook, eat and do their best to carry on as normally as they can, no matter how desperate their circumstances. => this may just be for noting, and that the lack of freedom for Palestinian people is a loss for them, and for us all. But there may be a thoughtful conversation to be had about the ongoing situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.