

“Broken Hill” starring Luke Arnold, Alexa Vega, Rhys Wakefield, Timothy Hutton, 2009, PG, 102 minutes

Major themes:

- Beauty
- Music
- Father / son relationships
- Prison
- Pursuing Dreams
- Lying
- Consequences

Background info:

- Broken Hill is an isolated mining city in the far west of outback New South Wales, Australia. With a population of 18,854, Broken Hill has been called The Silver City, the Oasis of the West, and the Capital of the Outback. It is Australia's longest-lived mining city. In 1844, the explorer Charles Sturt saw and named the Barrier Range, and at the time referred to a "Broken Hill" in his diary. Silver ore was later discovered there. The "broken hill" that gives it its name actually comprised a number of hills that appeared to have a break in them. The broken hill no longer exists, having been mined away.
- Willyama is the original Aboriginal name for the area in which Broken Hill is located.
- In Australia, the words “prison” and “jail” (or “gaol”) are synonymous!
- Pantera and Deep Purple are heavy metal bands
- The piano piece Tommy plays for Kat in the prison is “*Clair de Lune*” by Claude Debussy.

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- One technique of violin playing is called Collé - "stuck," or "glued," is a stroke that begins from a heavily weighted bow resting motionless on the string. Ideally, the initial weight will be almost enough to cause an undesirable scratch sound.
- The didgeridoo is a wind instrument developed by Indigenous Australians of northern Australia around 1,500 years ago and still in widespread use today both in Australia and around the world. Musicologists classify it as a brass aerophone. Didgeridoos are usually made from hardwoods, especially the various eucalyptus species that are endemic to the region. Sometimes a native bamboo is used. The didgeridoo is played with continuously vibrating lips to produce the drone while using a special breathing technique called circular breathing. This requires breathing in through the nose whilst simultaneously expelling stored air out of the mouth using the tongue and cheeks. By use of this technique, a skilled player can replenish the air in their lungs, and with practice can sustain a note for as long as desired. Recordings exist of modern didgeridoo players playing continuously for more than 40 minutes. A 2005 study in the British Medical Journal found that mastering the circular breathing technique and practising the didgeridoo helped reduce snoring and obstructive sleep apnea by strengthening muscles in the upper airway, thus reducing their tendency to collapse during sleep.
- A “cocky” is an Aussie abbreviation for “cockatoo”, a showy bird.
- “The dreamtime” is the Aboriginal term for the ancient time of the creation of all things.

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Scriptures:

Job 38:4 – 7 – *“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”*

Psalms 105:1 – 4 (The Message) – *“Hallelujah! Thank God! Pray to him by name! Tell everyone you meet what he has done! Sing him songs, belt out hymns, translate his wonders into music! Honor his holy name with Hallelujahs, you who seek God. Live a happy life! Keep your eyes open for God, watch for his works; be alert for signs of his presence.”*

1 John 4:9 – 11 (NLT) – *“God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.”*

Matthew 25:34 – 40 (NIV) – *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For . . . I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you . . . in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”*

Numbers 32:23 (NLT) – *“[Moses said], ‘If you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.’”*

Psalms 46:10 (NLT) – *“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”*

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Colossians 1:15 – 17 (Weymouth NT) – *“Christ is the visible representation of the invisible God, the Firstborn and Lord of all creation. For in Him was created the universe of things in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, thrones, dominions, principedoms, powers--all were created, and exist through and for Him. And HE IS before all things and in and through Him the universe is a harmonious whole.”*

Romans 8:26 – 27 (NLT) – *“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV) – *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”*

Major characters:

- Tommy McAlpine
- George McAlpine
- Kat Rogers
- Scott Price
- Maestro Pindari
- Bear, Ricardo, Fuzz
- Kalai Takalua
- Warden

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Discussion points:

1. Tommy “sees” music wherever he goes. What are some ways that we can better notice God’s beauty in creation and in people?
2. The prison warden finds pleasure in tending his beautiful flower garden. Discuss the God-given desire in every human heart for beauty.
3. The prison warden seems torn between administering justice and becoming emotionally involved with the prisoners. Discuss his comment, *“Unfortunately, it seems the policy makers have a soft spot in their heart for music. I suppose hearing the incarcerated singing helps them ease their collective conscience.”*
4. Is it a reasonable expectation or even possible to maintain emotional distance at all times from anyone, even a prisoner?
5. Kalai says that solitary confinement is *“a severe blow to my soul.”* As difficult as his punishment is, there were consequences for his choices. Share a time when you had to face the consequences for a choice you made.
6. God *“has made everything beautiful in its time.”* How can understanding this truth impact our prayers for others who seem less than beautiful or beyond help?