Hard Love
Love Anyway
Brian Wood

Key Scripture:
Ruth 1:14–16 (NLT)
14 And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. 15 “Look,” Naomi said to her, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same.”
16 But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

Ruth 2:2–3 (NLT)
2 One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go out into the harvest fields to pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.”
Naomi replied, “All right, my daughter, go ahead.”
3 So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

Ruth 2:15–16 (NLT)
15 When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, “Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her.
16 And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don’t give her a hard time!”

Ruth 4:13–17 (NLT)
13 So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. 14 Then the women of the town said to Naomi, “Praise the LORD, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. 15 May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!”
16 Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. 17 The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What is the most difficult commitment you have ever made without knowing what the final outcome would be?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Ruth 1:14-16**. What drove Ruth to place her "yes" on the table despite having no guarantee of a secure future? Why do we so frequently let fear and anxiety dictate our decisions rather than trusting God with an unknown outcome?

- **Read Ruth 2:2-3**. How does Ruth ending up in Boaz’ field demonstrate God’s provision? How has God faithfully provided for you in the past after you took a step of obedience?

- **Read Ruth 2:15-16**. What compelled Boaz to leave extra grain behind for a vulnerable foreigner? How can you "drop some barley" this week to support someone else who has just made a difficult leap of faith?

- **Read Ruth 4:13-17**. What does Ruth's story illustrate about our role in God’s plan for redemption? What situation or relationship are you asking God to redeem in your own life right now?

- Where in your own life do you currently need to "love anyway" without expecting anything in return?

- Where is God calling you to step in? Or what specific "yes" is the Holy Spirit currently pressing on your heart?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one specific area where you are withholding your "yes" out of fear. Commit to taking one faithful step of obedience this week, trusting God completely to handle the provision and the redemption.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank You for being a faithful God who always provides when we step out in obedience. Give us the courage to love anyway and to place our "yes" on the table, even when we don’t know the outcome. Use our small acts of faith to bring about Your perfect redemption. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotional

The Ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer

In the final week of the *Hard Love* series, Pastor Brian highlighted the redemption story found in the book of Ruth. When Ruth chose to "love anyway," she eventually met Boaz, who stepped in to purchase Naomi's land and take Ruth as his wife. In Jewish culture, Boaz acted as a "kinsman-redeemer".

This historical role foreshadows what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.

1. The Requirement of the Redeemer Under Old Testament law, a kinsman-redeemer had to meet specific requirements. First, he had to be a blood relative. Second, he had to be willing to redeem. Third, he had to be financially able to pay the redemption price. Boaz met all these requirements for Ruth and Naomi.

2. Jesus Became Our Kinsman
We were spiritually bankrupt, enslaved to sin, and incapable of buying back our own freedom. We needed a redeemer. In order to qualify, Jesus had to become our "kinsman." This is why the incarnation is so crucial: the Son of God took on human flesh so that He could become our blood relative. Hebrews 2:11 says, *"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."*

3. The Price Paid in Full Jesus was not only our relative, but He was willing to redeem us, and He was the only one able to pay the required price. Our redemption could not be purchased with silver or gold, but only with the precious, sinless blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). As Pastor Brian pointed out, Ruth and Boaz's son Obed became the grandfather of David, placing them directly in the family line of Jesus. The ultimate Redeemer was born from this story of hard love, people putting their “yes” on the table.

Reflection: How does viewing Jesus as your willing and capable Kinsman-Redeemer change how you view your own past mistakes? How can His radical, sacrificial love for you inspire you to "love anyway" when dealing with difficult people this week?

Adapted from GotQuestions.org: What is a kinsman redeemer?