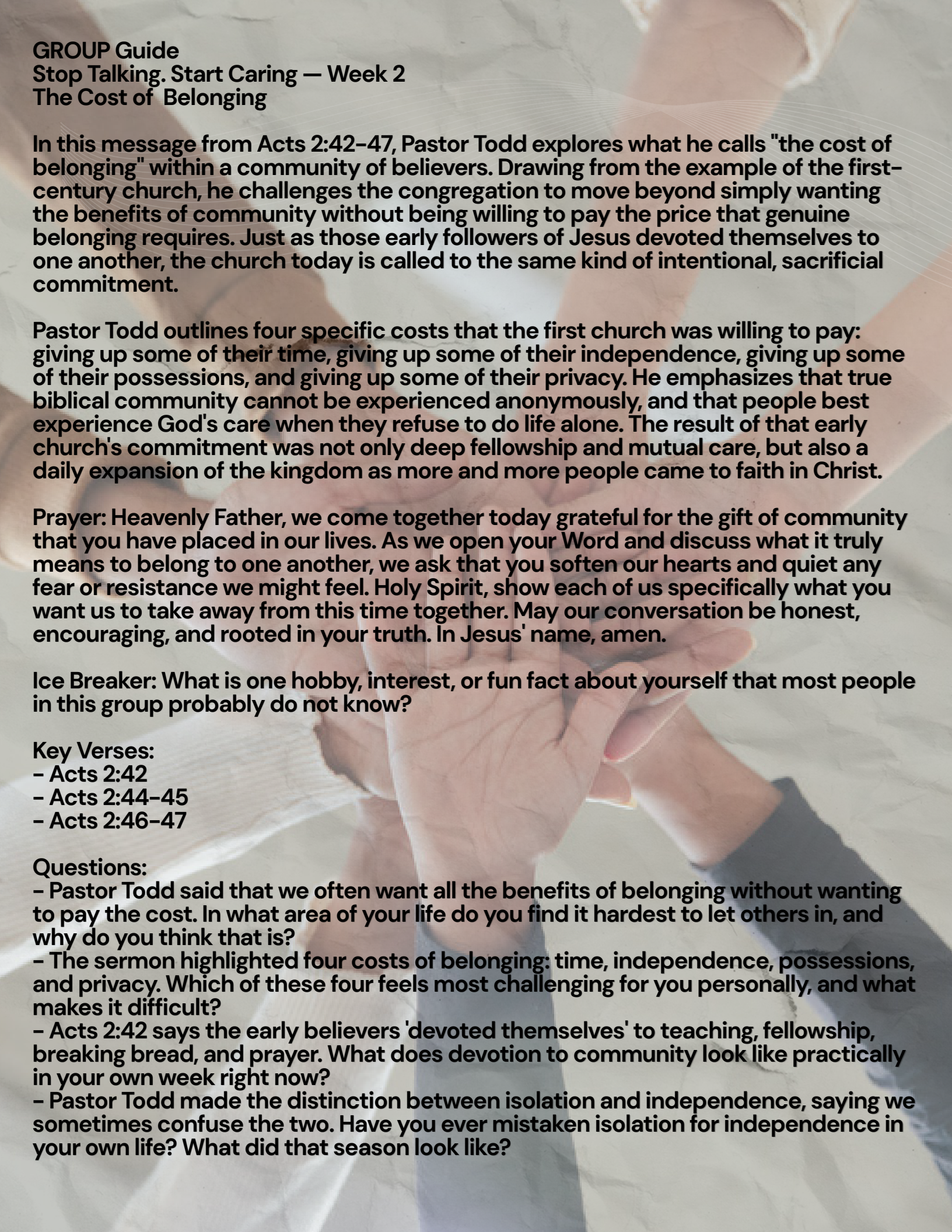




GROUP Guide

Stop Talking. Start Caring — Week 2

The Cost of Belonging

In this message from Acts 2:42–47, Pastor Todd explores what he calls "the cost of belonging" within a community of believers. Drawing from the example of the first-century church, he challenges the congregation to move beyond simply wanting the benefits of community without being willing to pay the price that genuine belonging requires. Just as those early followers of Jesus devoted themselves to one another, the church today is called to the same kind of intentional, sacrificial commitment.

Pastor Todd outlines four specific costs that the first church was willing to pay: giving up some of their time, giving up some of their independence, giving up some of their possessions, and giving up some of their privacy. He emphasizes that true biblical community cannot be experienced anonymously, and that people best experience God's care when they refuse to do life alone. The result of that early church's commitment was not only deep fellowship and mutual care, but also a daily expansion of the kingdom as more and more people came to faith in Christ.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come together today grateful for the gift of community that you have placed in our lives. As we open your Word and discuss what it truly means to belong to one another, we ask that you soften our hearts and quiet any fear or resistance we might feel. Holy Spirit, show each of us specifically what you want us to take away from this time together. May our conversation be honest, encouraging, and rooted in your truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker: What is one hobby, interest, or fun fact about yourself that most people in this group probably do not know?

Key Verses:

- Acts 2:42
- Acts 2:44–45
- Acts 2:46–47

Questions:

- Pastor Todd said that we often want all the benefits of belonging without wanting to pay the cost. In what area of your life do you find it hardest to let others in, and why do you think that is?
- The sermon highlighted four costs of belonging: time, independence, possessions, and privacy. Which of these four feels most challenging for you personally, and what makes it difficult?
- Acts 2:42 says the early believers 'devoted themselves' to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. What does devotion to community look like practically in your own week right now?
- Pastor Todd made the distinction between isolation and independence, saying we sometimes confuse the two. Have you ever mistaken isolation for independence in your own life? What did that season look like?

- The first church was willing to sell possessions and share resources to meet the needs around them. What resources, skills, or experiences has God given you that could serve someone else in this group or in the broader church community?
- Acts 2:46 describes believers breaking bread in their homes and receiving one another with glad and generous hearts. What would it look like for your home or your personal space to be more open to the people around you?
- Pastor Todd said, 'You can attend church anonymously, but you cannot experience biblical community anonymously.' How does that statement challenge or encourage you in your current level of involvement in the church?
- The sermon ended with the reminder that the early church's commitment to one another led to daily growth as people came to faith. How do you think a more deeply connected church community could impact the people around us who do not yet know Jesus?

Life Application:

This week, take one concrete step toward deeper community. If you are not in a small group, look up the groups available through the church app and commit to trying one. If you are already in a group, identify one person in your life who seems to be carrying something heavy, reach out to them, and ask a genuine question about how they are really doing. Then listen well, pray with them if they are open to it, and follow up before the week is over. The goal is simple: refuse to do life alone, and refuse to let someone near you do life alone either.

Key Takeaways:

- Belonging to a community of believers requires a real cost, including the willingness to give up time, independence, possessions, and privacy. The benefits of community cannot be fully received without accepting these costs.
- The early church in Acts 2 modeled devoted, consistent, and sacrificial community. Their commitment was not occasional or half-hearted but ongoing and intentional, described by Luke with the word 'devoted.'
- There are parts of following Jesus that simply cannot be done alone. You cannot bear one another's burdens, encourage one another, or forgive one another in isolation. Biblical community is not optional for a healthy faith.
- Isolation and independence are not the same thing. Choosing to remain disconnected from others often feels safe, but it prevents us from both receiving and offering the care that God designed the church to provide.
- The fruit of genuine community extends beyond the group itself. The early church's commitment to one another created an environment where the gospel spread daily, and that same dynamic is available to the church today.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for this time together and for the example of the first church in Acts 2. We confess that belonging can feel costly, and that opening our lives to others can feel risky. But we trust that you designed us for community, and that the price of belonging is far outweighed by the gift of it. Give each person in this group the courage to take one step closer to genuine connection this week. Where there is fear, replace it with faith. Where there is isolation, bring relationship. Where there is a need, raise up someone willing to meet it. May our church be known as a place where people are truly cared for and where no one has to carry life alone. We give you all the glory for what you are doing and what you are still going to do. In Jesus' name, amen.