

Hot Pad/Trivet

Scripture:

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:6)

Materials List:

- (1) Hot Pan
- (1) Hot Pad or Trivet

Main Message:

Truth shared without love can burn hearts. We must always share truth... but we must never forget to buffer it with love.

Song: *The Greatest Commandment*

Lesson:

If you pull something hot out of the oven without a hot pad or oven mitt, you get burned. If you put something straight from the stove onto a wooden table, your table ends up with scorch marks. Truth is like that too. If you don't buffer it with love, people get burned and their hearts end up with scorch marks.

Truth without love is such a common tale, it's almost a cliché. There's the elderly lady who confronts the immodestly dressed teen and the girl winds up in tears. There's the preacher who speaks against unbiblical beliefs, but the couple visiting for the first time didn't appreciate the preacher's tone and is never seen at services again. Did these people err in their truth? No, but they did forget to use a hot pad. They forgot to buffer their truth-telling with love-telling.

Maybe you've heard of the praise sandwich. It's a great tool for when you need to tell someone a truth that isn't going to be much fun to swallow. First, you say something positive. Praise them for something that they're doing right or affirm your love for them. Then gently lay the truth out. Before the conversation is over, make sure you tell them again how much you appreciate them and/or what they're doing right (bonus if you come up with something else they're doing right).

This is a technique Paul used often (though sometimes he had open-faced sandwiches-- he only praised at the beginning). In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10, Paul praises the Christians for their faith, love, perseverance and evangelism. In Philippians 1:1-11, He reminds the recipients of the affection he has for them. As he closes out the letter, in 4:10-23 he praises them for their help in spreading the gospel by supporting him.

Whenever you go to get something out of the oven, and you reach for a hot pad, let it be a reminder to you that truth goes better with love. As you put a trivet down to protect the table, remember that without love we are nothing but a resounding gong or clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Truth without love burns people and scorches hearts.

Prayer: Thank God for the opportunities you have to share truth with others and for those who have kindly shared truth with you. Ask Him for the wisdom to speak in love and for those who listen to have open hearts to the truth and to your love.