

Holy Conversations Without Being Holier-Than-Thou

What can chemistry teach us about conversations?

I'm glad you asked. I'm not a science geek—I often confuse the periodic table with an antique period piece of furniture—but I'm going to give you my best Christian version of Bill Nye, the Science Guy.

1. **Sodium** is a basic chemical element. Basic, but never alone. You don't find sodium hanging out by itself. Sodium clings to other elements to make compounds.
2. **Chlorine** is another basic element, but it is highly caustic and poisonous. Because it is deadly, we use chlorine to kill bacteria in swimming pools and to bleach our clothes. It's a stinker by itself, but it becomes very useful when combined with other elements.

There we have it: clingy sodium and caustic, deadly chlorine. When you combine the two, you get sodium chloride. We know this as salt. **Common table salt.**



Love is like sodium. Love never stands alone but is always looking for something to cling to. People will cling to whatever or whoever shows them love, even if it is abusive or a lie. Love without truth will cling to worthless things. To paraphrase that country-and-western theologian, Johnny Lee, we are “looking for love in all the wrong places.”

Truth is like chlorine. Truth is strong and powerful, overcoming anything that stands in its way. Truth without love hurts—and it hurts deep. If someone has ever blindsided you with a caustic but true statement, you know truth hurts.

But when truth and love are combined—wow.

When we express truth in a loving manner and all our actions are grounded in truth, we are salt, the kind of salt Jesus calls His followers to be.

“You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13).

We are commanded to love, but we do a disservice to others when we misapply what it means to love others. Parents who love their children correct their children. Discipline can be a great way to love one's children. Yet some people think if they tell others where they are in error, they are being unloving.

On the other hand, many Christians are focused on the truth—solely on the truth. That sounds like a good thing, right? But these are the ones who often get labeled as arrogant or holier-than-thou. They scream the truth at people without considering the way they convey God's truth. Their passion for the truth has not been tempered with love.

But mixing truth and love together are the perfect combination. We are never to compromise on the truth, but when it is mixed with love—love for God and love for the other person—people are far more willing to listen and hear the truth.

- Why do we add salt to our food? It enhances and adds flavor.
- Why do many restaurants serve peanuts? Peanuts are salty, making us thirsty, and we drink more.

As Christ's representatives—His salt putting His truth and love on display—we bring flavor and enhance the world around us. We make people thirsty for the source of that truth and love.

- Let's live our lives in a way that makes people thirsty for the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Let's live our lives in a way that makes people thirsty for the love of Jesus Christ.

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Col. 4:6).