

LOVE

1 Corinthians 13

Love—it is what the Beatles years ago saw as the answer to the problems in this world. “Love, love, love. All you need is love.” Yes, there is a lot of bad things out there, but if we work together, we can overcome that with love, right?

That assumes that we are basically loving people. But are we? Let’s look at ten things about people that research into human behavior shows:

1. We view minorities and the vulnerable as less than human. One striking example of this blatant dehumanisation came from a brain-scan [study](#) that found a small group of students exhibited less neural activity associated with thinking about people when they looked at pictures of the homeless or of drug addicts, as compared with higher-status individuals. Among other examples, there’s also evidence that young people dehumanise [older people](#) and that men and women alike dehumanize [drunken women](#). What’s more, the inclination to dehumanize starts [early](#) – children as young as five view out-group faces (of people from a different city or a different gender to the child) as less human than in-group faces.

2. We take pleasure at another person’s distress. By the age of four, according to a [study](#) from 2013, that sense is heightened if the child perceives that the person deserves the distress. A more recent [study](#) found that, by age six, children will pay to watch an antisocial puppet being hit, rather than spending the money on stickers.

3. We believe in karma – assuming that the downtrodden of the world deserve their fate. The unfortunate consequences of such beliefs were first demonstrated in [research](#) from 1966 by the psychologists Melvin Lerner and Carolyn Simmons. Women who were shocked for wrong answers were looked down on by others because they couldn’t do anything about it. To make our world more just, it is easy for us to explain others’ problems as being deserved rather than something we need to do something about.

4. We are blinkered and dogmatic. If people were rational and open-minded, then the

straight-forward way to correct someone’s false beliefs would be to present them with some relevant facts. However, a classic study on those for or against the death penalty showed that whichever side you were on determined what you thought, not the facts.

5. We would rather electrocute ourselves than spend time in our own thoughts. This was demonstrated in a controversial 2014 [study](#) in which 67 per cent of male participants and 25 per cent of female participants opted to give themselves unpleasant electric shocks rather than spend 15 minutes in peaceful contemplation.

6. We are vain and overconfident. Many of us having inflated views about our abilities and qualities, such as our driving skills, [intelligence](#) and attractiveness – a phenomenon that’s been dubbed the Lake Wobegon Effect after the fictional town where ‘all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average’. Ironically, according to the Dunning-Kruger [effect](#), the least skilled among us are the most prone to overconfidence. This is even worse in our [morality](#) as even jailed [criminals](#) think they are kinder, more trustworthy and honest than the average member of the public.

7. We are moral hypocrites. Jesus is the one who warned about taking out the log in our own eyes before we consider the speck in another person’s eye. We see others bad deeds as a part of their character, while our own similar deeds are part of the situation at hand. Recent [research](#) shows that we view the same acts of rudeness far more harshly when they are committed by strangers than by our friends or ourselves.

8. We are all potential trolls. As anyone who has found themselves in a spat on Twitter will attest, social media might be magnifying some of the worst aspects of human nature, in part due to the online [disinhibition](#) effect, and the fact that [anonymity](#) (easy to achieve online) is known to increase our inclinations for immorality. This snowballs when people exchange invective back and forth online.

9. We favor ineffective leaders with psychopathic traits. A [survey](#) of financial leaders in New York found that they scored highly on psychopathic traits but lower than average in emotional intelligence. Another study published this summer concluded that there is indeed a modest but significant link between higher trait psychopathy and gaining leadership positions, which is important since psychopathy also correlates with poorer leadership.

10. We are sexually attracted to people with dark personality traits. Not only do we elect people with psychopathic traits to become our leaders, [evidence suggests](#) that men and women are sexually attracted, at least in the short term, to people who take advantage of other people, and thus risk further propagating these traits. One [study](#) found that a man's physical attractiveness to women was increased when he was described as self-interested, manipulative, and insensitive.

That doesn't sound too good for us humans. But it actually confirms what God in His Word tells us. Paul, who wrote 1 Corinthians 13 said in Romans quoting the Psalmists:

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

God created us in love. He created us to love Him and one another. But we separate ourselves from God and each other with sin. Our love won't help.

The Beatles were right—what we need is love, but not the love that they or we have. Instead it is the love that Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians. It is a love that can overcome the problems of our human condition. Let us look at those ten points we saw earlier and counter them with the description of love in 1 Corinthians.

1. We view minorities and the vulnerable as less than human. "Love is kind."
2. We take pleasure in another's distress. "Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing."
3. We believe in karma. "Love hopes all things."
4. We are blinkered and dogmatic. "Love bears all things."

5. We would rather electrocute ourselves than spend time in our own thoughts. "Love is patient."

6. We are vain and overconfident. "Love does not boast; it is not arrogant."

7. We are moral hypocrites. "Love rejoices with the truth."

8. We are all potential trolls. "Love is not irritable or resentful."

9. We favor ineffective leaders with psychopathic traits. "Love does not insist on its own way."

10. We are sexually attracted to people with dark personality traits. "Love is not rude."

So we just love, right? No, we can't because we don't have that love. But God does! When Paul speaks of love, he places it with faith and hope. And all three of those things he places as gifts from God. No, we don't love, but God loves us. And in His Son, Christ Jesus, He loved in our place. Let us again look at those ten things about people and look at them in connection to 1 Corinthians, but substitute "Jesus" for the word "love."

1. We view minorities and the vulnerable as less than human. "Jesus is kind."

2. We take pleasure in another's distress. "Jesus does not rejoice at wrongdoing."

3. We believe in karma. "Jesus hopes all things."

4. We are blinkered and dogmatic. "Jesus bears all things."

5. We would rather electrocute ourselves than spend time in our own thoughts. "Jesus is patient."

6. We are vain and overconfident. "Jesus does not boast; He is not arrogant."

7. We are moral hypocrites. "Jesus rejoices with the truth."

8. We are all potential trolls. "Jesus is not irritable or resentful."

9. We favor ineffective leaders with psychopathic traits. "Jesus does not insist on its own way."

10. We are sexually attracted to people with dark personality traits. "Jesus is not rude."

The love we fail to have and show, Jesus is and showed in our place, and because He did that we too can love.