

# “Can You Give Examples of Subtle Invalidation?”

In Kerby Anderson’s article [Why Marriages Fail](#) he writes, “Invalidation is a pattern in which one partner subtly or directly puts down the thoughts, feelings, or character of the other.”

**What other examples can you give of subtle invalidation?**

I decided to answer your question because it’s helpful to have a woman’s perspective in addition to a man’s (as what you read in Kerby’s excellent essay). Here’s what I came up with:

- *Rolling the eyes at something a spouse says*
- *Ignoring the spouse when they’re talking*
- *A dismissing or contemptuous tone of voice in saying things like “I don’t think so” or “You’re wrong” or “Like you would know anything about that!” (Note: those very words can be used in affectionate banter when said with a smile and in the context of a spouse’s strengths.)*
- *Any form of sarcasm*
- *Making plans without consulting the spouse (which would affect the spouse)*
- *Ridiculing a spouse’s dreams and hopes, even in jest*
- *Continually rejecting a spouse’s romantic or sexual overtures*
- *Choosing to spend time chatting with internet friends (especially of the opposite sex) over being with one’s spouse*
- *Not acknowledging the heart issues behind the words that a spouse shares*
- *Not looking at a spouse when they’re talking*
- *Being critical of or ridiculing a spouse in public, even in jest*
- *In a dispute or disagreement that involves the children, ganging up with them against the spouse*

- *Saying things to one's kids like "Oh, your mother is just being wierd (stupid, illogical, emotional, etc.) again" or "Don't listen to your father, he doesn't know what he's talking about"*

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **"Help Me Figure Out Why My Relationship Hurts!"**

I checked out the article where you and that guy were making comparisons between [Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus](#), and the Bible. That discussion really interested me because I am reading *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*, and I began thinking as I was reading it and I developed a theory... First I thought about older people (ages 55 and up). I have seen so many of those older couples still holding hands and being very loving together. I found my self asking what is so different in relationships today and relationships in the fifties and earlier? Why do so many relationships fail today and not in those yester years? I came to the conclusion that Christianity must have been the key. Not only does the Bible provide instruction for healthy relationships, it also provides people (believers) with a feeling of fulfillment. Never before have I ever really understood the real reason for the verse "Do not be unequally yoked." It causes a real strain on relationships, and I have been through many unmeaningful and heartbreaking relationships. I was wondering since you have read the whole book *Men are From Mars and Women are from*

*Venus* if you could help me with my most recent relationship problem.

I have a great boyfriend—he is very beautiful on the outside and inside, he is considerate in fulfilling my needs, buying me gifts, and taking on his fair share of the cooking and cleaning responsibilities. I really love him for that. I know that he likes me or else he wouldn't be with me and he says that when I ask him how he feels about me. Actually he says you know how I feel about you why else would I be with you, and if I say how I feel about you too much it won't mean as much. How should I go about telling him that it means the world to me every time I hear (which is totally not enough and I feel unfulfilled because of it) him say how much he cares about me and I really need some reassurance right now about his feelings or I will have to leave him because I am very fragile right now and every day I grow more and more insecure in how I feel as to where I am in our relationship. I am even starting to question if he really wants me to go with him when he asks me if I would like to go out with him and a friend for lunch. Then he gets mad and says I wouldn't ask you if I didn't want you to come. I constantly wish he would just give me some reassurance, any kind, because I feel myself hurting soooo much, and I know he is hurting too because he doesn't like to see me sad. I think that he has a really hard time expressing how he feels towards me because he has been single for 30 years now (he has had long relationships that end badly) and like MAFMWAFV says that men start to love people and they pull away so they can find their own self because they are afraid they will lose their sense of independence. Do you think that he is really struggling with something like that or what do you think I should do to solve my problem? I really sincerely love him and I don't want him to slip away because I don't understand or know something that I should. When I am done my formatted and fully (to the best of my knowledge and understanding) completed correlation between the Bible and MAFMWAFV I will send you a copy. I know you probably

**get about a million emails a day so if you can't answer mine I want you to know that I feel a little better just having gotten all of this off of my chest. Thank You Sue!**

Wow, sounds like you have your emotional plate full. Question: are you living with your boyfriend? (Otherwise, why would you mention "his fair share of the cooking and cleaning responsibilities"?) If you are, no wonder you're so insecure! Tell me, what are you getting out of this relationship? It sounds like you're giving him the benefits of having a wife without requiring that he give you the commitment of a husband.

That's a big reason why God wants us to be married before setting up house. It sets us up for major pain to give ourselves away without a foundation of trust.

Trust is everything, and trust is closely tied to commitment. If I were you, I would pull waaaaaay back and stop giving yourself away without a commitment. If he loves you, he will pursue you and marry you. If he's just "enjoying the milk without buying the cow," (to use an old expression), then if you leave and he doesn't pursue you then you will know he is using you. Even if he's fond of you, he's using you. With your permission. (Ouch!) Which is not a way to demonstrate self-respect.

I would also suggest that you read Gary Chapman's book "The 5 Love Languages," and ask him to read it or listen to it on tape. Sounds like your love language is verbal affirmation, and he needs to know that you need to HEAR verbal appreciation and affirmations of love to feel loved. I cannot tell you how disrespectful it sounds to hear the excuse "If I tell you all the time how I feel about you it won't mean as much." Ask him why he eats all the time instead of only at Thanksgiving. I mean, eating all the time diminishes the meaning of eating, right? Wrong! It nourishes his body, just as hearing "I love you and I appreciate you" nourishes your heart and your

relationship.

I hope these observations help. I am concerned for you because it sounds like you're the one paying emotionally in this relationship, and you're treating yourself poorly. I like what psychologist [Dr. Phil](#) says: "We teach people how to treat us." Sounds to me like you're teaching your boyfriend that it's OK to get what he wants from you without any reciprocal commitment on his part. Doesn't sound fair—or healthy—to me! And for SURE it isn't what God commands in scripture, which is a way to protect and provide for women's fragility and need for security.

You might also want to read Dr. Laura's (Schlessinger) *The 10 Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives*. It's a good read because it is consistent with biblical values. . . such as the value of marriage and purity and commitment and servant leadership.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **"I'm Depressed; What Causes Happiness?"**

I am depressed right now and so is my friend. What causes happiness? I don't want the chemical description, but what stuff, like situations and actions, causes happiness? I know that the Bible says that just because we are Christians, doesn't mean we won't suffer. But how would I get out of depression? I don't want an answer like read your Bible and

**pray, because I do that every night, and here I am still depressed. There's no fun in life anymore, and somewhere along the line, I lost the fire of the Spirit. I wish I could get it back.**

I realize yours is a very serious question, and having walked through deep depression with our son several years ago, I would be the LAST person to give you the cliché of “read your Bible and pray more.”

Sometimes, depression is caused by a brain chemical imbalance. In that case, medications are the best way to adjust the brain chemistry. Sometimes, depression is caused by unconfessed sin. That needs to be faced, repented of, and confessed, both to God and to other people. Sometimes, depression is caused by loss and sorrow. The way out of that kind of depression is to embrace the grieving process. That means facing and feeling the pain of loss and grief so that you can let go of it. (That also means crying, yelling, journaling one's feelings, or all of the above.)

One very wise person has said that an intrinsic part of happiness is having something to look forward to. I have found this to be true.

So what causes happiness? Generally speaking, it's:

- cultivating a positive attitude (This is admittedly harder for people with melancholy temperaments.)
- not having anything sad going on
- the presence of something worth anticipating
- having friends; healthy relationships is an important part of happiness

And probably the most important thing I have to offer you is the suggestion that you cultivate a grateful heart. People who get in the habit of looking for and expressing gratitude for the small and large blessings of life find themselves in better physical and emotional health. One of the best things

you can do for yourself right now is to invest in a small notebook and write in your “Gratitude Journal” every single night before going to bed. Write down ten things you are grateful for, things in which God showed you He loves you, things that went well during the day. Things like parts of your body that work and aren’t in pain. Things that are easy to take for granted but which you would REALLY miss if they went away tomorrow, like your bed, running water, electricity, heating and air conditioning, having transportation, paved roads, lungs that breathe for you without having to think about it. . . you get the picture?

Usually, I suggest people write down three things, but if you’re really struggling with depression, ten will help more. It will help you focus on the many, many good things in your life instead of focusing on the flatness and darkness of your depression.

Let me know several months down the road how you’re doing, OK?

Sue Bohlin

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## **“My Christian Girlfriend Doesn’t Want to Follow My Hindu Faith”**

I read Rick Rood’s [article on Hinduism](#) with interest; I am faced with a dilemma and was hoping if you could offer me some advice and solace. I am a Hindu and have received a proposal from a Christian girl – AG denomination; (she converted from Hinduism 3 years ago).

Whilst my parents expect her to follow my religion after marriage; I am of the view that she can follow her religion but she has to partake in all my Hindu religious activities; and that we have to have a Hindu marriage. I also respect Christianity and she can go to church etc. with myself accompanying her whenever possible.

She has come back to me saying that all the above will be a sin in Christianity and that she will be punished if she participates in my activities. I have been advised by my priest to participate in her activities where possible. I respect her choice of religion coz for me there is only one god; it's just that we all have our own ways of faith.

I also realize that there are other factors like children to be considered here. I like this girl and will find your advice invaluable.

It would also help if you could provide me the details of people who have been in a similar situation. And at the same time it would also help if you could look into the prospects of taking out a "best practices" manual for lets say hindu/christian; christian/muslim marriages etc. which would provide some sort of a guideline.

Thank you for your kind letter. I do not know which article of Rick's that you read, but if you haven't yet read his article entitled, [Do All Roads Lead to God? The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions](#) I would encourage you to do so. I think it will help you better understand your Christian girlfriend's perspective on participating in your Hindu religious activities.

In the Bible, the second book is called Exodus. In Exodus 20:1-6 the Lord gives His people the first two of the Ten Commandments. These are: 1. To have (or worship) no other gods except the Lord, and 2. Not to make, or worship, any idols or images of anything in all creation. As you can probably see,



these first two commandments would make it very difficult for your Christian friend to be faithful to her own religious convictions AND participate in Hindu religious activities.

Christians believe that Jesus is the only way to God. In fact, this is what Jesus Himself claimed in John 14:6. Jesus demands our exclusive devotion and allegiance. We are not allowed to worship anyone else but the one true God of the Bible.

Although I cannot tell you what to do about marriage, I do know that (statistically speaking) interfaith marriages are much more difficult and face many more problems than do marriages in which both partners have shared religious beliefs. I would encourage both of you to seriously consider these difficulties BEFORE you get married. For example, in what religious tradition will your children be raised? What will they be taught about God, what happens after death, etc.?

Finally, if you're interested in learning what the Bible says about how a person can have a personal relationship with God, please visit the following web page: [http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page\\_id=276](http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=276). This website also has the entire Bible available for you to read and study if you like.

Thanks again for writing.

Wishing you all the best for your future,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries

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# **“Help Me With My Adult Children!”**

Hi Sue,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I just read your article you wrote about [Dr. Laura](#). I just have to tell you, I am a Jew born anew (but I have been backslidden for years now). Maybe God led me to your article. I couldn't agree more with you. Dr. Laura just doesn't understand because she is still blinded like I was. And I was an example like the apostle Paul. One second I thought Jesus was a good man, the next minute, all I did was whisper his name in a moment of deep despair, and I knew he was the son of God and I believed.

The reason I decided to drop you a line is about my two boys who are 21 and 19. Trying to live on their own. I haven't been able to see them for 2 years now because I couldn't afford it after a bad divorce after 18 years of marriage.

I actually was going to write Dr. Laura, than I saw your article and I thought maybe you could give me some insight. I am now remarried, neither of us are living for the Lord but I did just buy a Bible because my husband is interested in all the scripture I do discuss with him.

The dilemma is, my boys just can't seem to buckle down and keep jobs and take on responsibility. They have no choice but to make their own way in this world, buy I still feel like I owe them even though I don't make much money. My husband and I got them started in their apartment and we told them now you work and pay for all the things you need, however, the youngest I think has gotten into drugs and hardly works, so the older brother was feeding him and paying all the bills. Of course this is ridiculous but he now feels responsible. To make matters worse, the older son just called me to let me

know he got fired from his good job in the computer field. He said something about missing a meeting due to oversleeping. I don't believe he is telling the whole truth. They want to move closer to me but of course they don't have hardly a dime to their name. I am in such a despair because I desperately want to see my kids, yet I know I have to believe in a tough love belief if I want them to grasp reality. We cannot support them and we shouldn't have to. What does God's word say about situations like this? I am a little afraid to find out because I do feel like I failed as a mom and as a Christian.

Is there any hope for me? or for my kids?

P.S. I won't be mad if you do not respond. This is a little freaky that I am even asking a complete stranger for help, but I don't have a church home and I would like a Christian perspective. Thank you!

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

First of all, I'm so glad to meet a sister in Christ who has deep-deep-DEEP roots in Judaism!!! ☐

Secondly, my two boys are 19 and 21 also, and I understand COMPLETELY where you're coming from. I think huge numbers of kids/young adults struggle, because of our surrounding culture that says adolescence means you're entitled to privileges without responsibilities. But, of course, real life doesn't work that way.

::::::::::Putting my "Dr. Laura" hat on here::::::::::

May I suggest that the feeling that you "owe your kids" is misguided? You've done your best and now they're adults. (I know, 19 and 21 doesn't LOOK like adulthood as it did when we were that age.) You gave them the huge boost of putting them into an apartment, which is more than many parents could or would do, and said, "You are now responsible for maintaining this. You are adults, now act like it." And they responded, it

seems, by saying, "Don't wanna be an adult. I'm going to do whatever I want and not think about the consequences."

If you bail them out now you will be teaching them that someone else (YOU!!) will pay the consequences for their foolish and self-centered choices. And what do you think that will mean the next time? You can be sure they won't make MORE responsible choices!

Dr. Kevin Leman wrote a great book on child-rearing called *How to Make Children Mind Without Losing Yours*. It's really a book on "reality discipline." The whole concept is to use natural consequences—which is the way God set up the world, right? Consider His command: "If one will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). Those are natural consequences. Sounds like it's in the same ballpark as, "If one chooses sleep over work, let him have to settle for a less-satisfying job." Or, "If one will not work but takes drugs instead, let him discover there is no physical or financial support for that kind of selfish, immature mindset."

You say they want to move closer to you but they don't have money to do that. (And why not? Because of the choices they made?!) Well, guess what. In the real world, if we don't have money, that limits our options. Why do you think they want to move closer to you? So you can give them money and pretend they're little boys again! Not a good thing.

The book of Proverbs has LOTS to say about this issue, and I'm going to give you the privilege of digging out what applies to your situation. Look at it as a treasure hunt! <smile>

It's okay to strengthen your spine, Mom. Your kids will be better off for it, and so will you. It's okay to bite your tongue and not be "Mommy to the rescue." It will help them accept responsibility for themselves if no one else will. And no one else should—they're adults now!

I do hope this helps. You are SO RIGHT about needing to adopt

a “tough love” stance. Everybody will be better off for it down the road; your part is to trust in the Lord’s strength and not your own as you take that position of loving your kids wisely by helping them grow into their adult responsibilities by letting them feel the full consequences of their choices.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries