

What Keeps You Up At Night Msg 3
 Criticism & Conflict
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
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We're in a series called **"What Keeps You Up At Night?"**

And thinking about the things that keep you up at night, somebody sent me this picture. . . .

Dear sleep, I'm so sorry I hated you when I was little, Please forgive me. . . I want you back!

Do you remember that?

When you were little?

"I don't want to go to bed"

"I don't want to take a nap"

And now, it's **"Can I please just fall asleep!"**

Some of you really struggle with this.

You've tried **earplugs**

You've tried **a dark room**

You've tried **white noise**

It's like nothing helps

Others of you can sleep through a hurricane

If that's you, you just need to know that the people in this room who **struggle to fall asleep** and **stay asleep hate you.**

And that's a good segue to what we're talking about this morning which is . . .

Conflict - - Criticism

It's one of the things that cause us to lie awake at night worrying.

I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, but **I will ask you to think about this.**

How many of you would say that over the last month or so, you've had some conflict with someone?

That you've been criticized by someone?

I think that **if we did raise hands on this one**, and **if we were being honest**, that **all of us would have our hands raised.**

Some of you have **seen friendships dissolve** over conflict

Some of you have **lost jobs** over conflict.

And **today we've also got conflicts online.**

We've invented phrases like **"Twitter Beef"** to describe the conflicts and criticism that occurs when we're online

We've got **conflicts while driving** - we call it Road Rage

If you are living with someone else - - whether that's a spouse or a roommate you are **going to have some conflict** in your life.

And **conflict can not only keep you up at night**, but according to health experts, **conflict related stress** is one of the **number one causes of sickness.**

There was an **article in the NY Times** that reported on a **study that was conducted at OSU's college of medicine**

The study results appeared in the journal

Psychoneuroendocrinology.

And what they did in this study was . . .

They took newlywed couples and they put them in an environment where they made them talk about potentially volatile issues.

Stuff like housework, sex, in-laws, that kind of thing

While they were discussing these issues, their blood was being drawn

As they talked, here is what these researchers found

The **more they began to have conflict**, the **more that their immune system began to decline.**

What the study discovered is that there is a **direct correlation between your health and conflict.**

<https://news.osu.edu/how-ugly-marital-spats-might-open-the-door-to-disease/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3812415/>

Another study, done at the **University Of Utah** by a **Psychologist named Timothy Smith** **Smith studied couples** who had been married for over 30 years

He found that **the more unresolved conflict that they had**, the **more likely they were to contract a heart disease**.

<https://www.latest.facebook.com/cpcdanville/videos/1815988781767159/?v=1815988781767159>

Pastor Cathy Burkholder – Resolving Conflict in Relationships

https://vimeo.com/258570243?fbclid=IwAR1brnFY4EPs-k1FHPriMDTEo2YHkW_3JCjCPehKEKN6epAaW6uh3ZI2cXw

Do you ever wonder what God thinks about all of this?

Remember **God is a perfect and loving Father**

If you were a perfect and loving father and **you watched one of your kids - -and you saw that they weren't sleeping well at night** and you **saw that they were having some health issues because of all the conflict** in their life - - **how would you feel about that?**

We shouldn't be surprised that the **Bible has a lot to say about us getting along with each other.**

Working through conflict & Living in Harmony

This is a big deal to God

And so the question I want us to look at today is . . .

“How Can You And I Resolve Conflict Well?”

How can we deal with conflict and criticism **in a way that honors God and helps our relationships?**

I want us to look at three ways, all of them from Romans chapter 12

The first one is this . . .

1. If Possible Live at Peace

Romans 12 is one of the best chapters in scripture on resolving conflict

If you've never read it before I'd encourage you to read through that chapter this week

Here's what Paul says in verse 18 which is also our . . .

Memory Verse

He says . . .

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18

What he tells us in those words, is that **it takes two to tangle**.

In any conflict, **you've got a part** and the **other person has a part**.

And what I like about this verse is **it begins with you – it begins with me**.

It says, ***“If it's possible, as far as it depends on you”***

Now please understand

In any conflict, at the end of the day . . .

All you can do is **all you can do**.

But **you can do** all you can do.

And the question is . . .

Have you done that?

If you're in the midst of a conflict with someone right now, have you pulled that person aside and apologized for your part in the misunderstanding?

When was the last time you said to another person...

“I should not have behaved that way, would you please forgive me?”

Parents, when is the last time you said to your son or your daughter...

“I'm sorry for the way I spoke to you.

That's not the way I want to speak to you?”

“Would you please forgive me for what I said?”

If your answer to that question is ***“I don't remember”***

Or, ***“I don't know if I've ever said something like that”***

Then maybe, just maybe, you're not doing **all you can do** to live at peace.

Because notice what this verse does NOT say

It does NOT say. . .

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on your spouse, make sure that they are doing all that they can to live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18

It doesn't say . . .

As far as it depends **on your kids**, ***make sure that they are doing all that they can to live at peace with everyone.*** **Romans 12:18**

No - The focus rests squarely on us.

He says, ***as far as it depends on you***

Make sure you're doing all that you can do.

Let me show you a little bit from the book of Proverbs about what it says about conflict. . . .

Proverbs 29 says . . .

"An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins."

Proverbs 29:22

Some of us here today . . .

I can't tell you how. . .

I can't tell you when . . .

But somewhere along the way, you have become an **"angry person"**

Maybe you're aware of it, and you're thinking **"I know."**

"You're right! I'm an angry person. I don't know how it happened. But that is what I've become. And I would give anything to not be an angry person."

If that's you, I believe that with that kind of attitude of humility, God will begin to do a work in your life.

It may not happen immediately, but over time, I believe you will become more self-controlled, as it relates to your anger, and more gentle as it relates to the way you speak to others.

Others of you say . . .

"Yeah, I'm not angry. I don't have an anger problem. It's just the people around me who are too thin skinned."

And what you're blind to is that it's your words and your mood that is stirring up the conflict that is going on around you.

He says here ***"An angry person stirs up conflict. . . ."***

Another verse from Proverbs

Proverbs 16:28

"A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends." **Proverbs**

16:28

Last verse we'll look at from Proverbs

Proverbs 28:25

"He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered." **Proverbs 28:25**

Each of these verses is pointing to the kind of person who stirs up conflict.

An **ANGRY** person

A **TROUBLEMAKER**

A **PROUD** person

Stirs up conflict

Which means if you are **ANGRY**, if you are a **TROUBLEMAKER**, if you are **PROUD**

You are going to have a lot of conflict in your life.

If you spend a lot of time with people who are **ANGRY**, and **TROUBLEMAKERS**, and **PROUD**, you are going to have a lot of conflict in your life.

How are we supposed to deal with this?

There's a verse in your notes from Titus chapter 3 and it says this.

It says . . .

"If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them." **Titus 3:10**

Now let me make sure that I give you one qualifier when it comes to this verse.

If the person in your life who is causing conflict is your spouse, this is not saying to divorce them.

Jesus said, "That which God has brought together, don't tear apart."

Try to work through the conflict

Work to resolve the conflict

You may need a third party – a counselor, or a pastor to help you work it through.

In his book

“The Power Of The Other”

The author, Henry Cloud, comments on this verse . . .

He says . . . that for years he couldn't understand this verse.

It just seemed so harsh

One warning,

Then two warnings,

And then after that you're done?

Then Cloud became a leadership consultant who works with businesses and CEOs

Listen to what he writes in his book.

He says this . . .

“I learned something: Divisive people cause more harm than whatever good things they bring are worth.” – Henry Cloud Author

In other words, if you've got somebody in your company and they are a pretty good performer but they are always stirring up conflict and causing division

Cloud says the negative will always outweigh the positive.

He goes on and says this. . .

“The real issue is that people who habitually do this and are not willing to look at themselves and try to resolve things

They're not willing to do their part.

He says . . .

“Instead, they prefer to get people to side with them and agree with them rather than create unity and resolution”

You probably know somebody like the person he is describing.

Someone who is not looking to resolve the conflict, but rather to just try to rally as many people as they can to get on their side.

When they do that, they are stirring up conflict and causing divisions.

Cloud concludes his thoughts on this with these words.

He says. . . .

“I can't count the number of ugly situations I've been called to that finally resolved after the boss asked the divisive trouble-maker to leave.”

How much conflict do you have in your life these days?

At home. . .

At work . . .

At church . . .

Those words written by the Apostle Paul in our memory verse are sobering words because they say . . .

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with WHO????

With everyone.” Romans 12:18

Not just the Democrats or the Republicans

Not just with Christians

Not just with Non-Christians

Not just with people who **look** like you, **dress** like you, **think** like you, and **act** like you

He says **“Do your part to live at peace with everyone”**

And then he inserts the qualifier . . .

“if it is possible”

Is it always possible?

No!

Have you realized that there are some people you can't please?

No matter what you do, no matter how hard you try, no matter how nice you are to them you just can't please them -- fact is some people are unpleasable.

Even Jesus couldn't please everybody.

On one occasion Jesus healed ten lepers.

Only one came back to give him thanks and to experience the spiritual transformation that he offered.

When those nine lepers didn't come back to give him thanks, somehow I have a hard time picturing Jesus saying ***“Where did i fail?”***

When we assume that we can please everybody we're presuming to do something that Jesus couldn't do.

You **can't solve every problem**

You **can't force every person to live in peace with you.**

But you can do **"as much as possible"** to get to that point.

But, having said that. . . .

Here's the tough part. . .

How do I know when I've done "as much as possible"?

Somebody wronged me twelve years ago. . . .

I asked them could we talk about this. . .

We haven't spoken since. . .

Is that doing **"as much as possible"?**

Let me ask you . . .

Do you think they'd say you've done as much as possible??

If I asked them about the conflict between you and them, would they say that you've done everything possible to resolve the conflict, to make amends and to live at peace?

Hard question.

That's the first way to resolve conflict, here's the second

2. Never Repay Evil With Evil

Look at what Paul says in verses 20-21

***"If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. . . Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good."* Romans 12:20-21**

Who is your enemy right now?

Who is that difficult person in your life right now?

Sometimes we call them **SANDPAPER** people because they **"rub us the wrong way."**

Other times we call them **EGR's** –

Are you familiar with that term?

E.G.R.?

It stands for

Extra Grace Required

Because that's what it takes to deal with them.

If you've got your message notes out, maybe you could be bold enough to just **write their name**, or their **initials** there on your notes.

If they're in the room you can **just draw an arrow** in their direction.

If you don't want to do that, you could just in your mind think about that difficult person you're dealing with.

The first thing we need to understand about these people is that

our responsibility isn't to fight them or go to war against them but to do the best we can at **living in peace**

Part of doing everything possible to live at peace with everyone, based on these verses . . .

Would be to do something good for that person.

You say ***"I don't want to do something good for that person."***

Of course you don't.

That's why they fall under the category of ***"enemy."***

The most natural reaction in the world to seeing an enemy hungry, would be to **NOT** give them food.

To let them go hungry.

But the Bible says never repay evil with evil

Instead, pray for that person

Help that person

James chapter 1 puts it this way

***"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires."* James 1:19-20**

Don't miss that last phrase. . . .

Producing **the righteousness God desires.**

What I think we too often miss is that . . .

What we've been talking about this morning, when we're talking about **Responding to Criticism & Conflict**

This is not **just a people issue, it's a spiritual issue**

How you respond to criticism & conflict says something about your spiritual maturity.

Do you remember when Jesus was once asked, **what the greatest of all the commandments** in the law was?

Someone came to him and said. . .

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Jesus said. . .

"This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:36-38

But He didn't stop there.

Even though the question was only asking for that He identify one commandment as **"The Greatest"**

Jesus went on and said. . .

"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:39-40

Did you ever wonder in what sense this second commandment is

"LIKE" the first?

I think in our minds. . . .

The way that we like to 'compartmentalize' things, we see these two things as separate.

There's the way I relate to God. . . .

That's one thing. . .

And then there's the way I relate to the people around me. . .

And that's something else.

Jesus doesn't allow that compartmentalization.

You can't separate your relationship with God, from your relationship with the people around you .

..

Even the. . .

Or maybe especially the people who are critical and causing conflict.

The Apostle John, in his first letter says. . .

"If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother. . .

He has **"MISSPOKEN"**

He has **"MISSTATED the facts"**

Is that what it says?

No!

What it says is . . .

"If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, HE IS A LIAR.

For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." I John 4:20-21

Why?

Because, try as you will, you can't separate these two.

. . . **THE WAY WE RESPOND TO CRITICISM & CONFLICT REVEALS THE TRUE condition of our heart**

One of the most **DISTINGUISHING MARKS** of a follower of Jesus is their love for those **people that they WOULD NOT and COULD NOT love on their own.**

Look at these words of Jesus from Luke 6

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked

And then he ends with a little command

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

What He is teaching here in Luke chapter 6 is that
THE MOST DISTINGUISHING MARK OF A GENUINE FOLLOWER OF JESUS IS NOT HOW
WE LOVE PEOPLE THAT ARE EASY TO LOVE

It's how we love people that are hard to love.

Basically what he says is **"When you are in the Mafia** – you're in the family – they love one another"

So what?

Drug dealers love other drug dealers.

He says **the real issue** is when you **love someone who's outside of your circle**

You may be saying - **"But I don't have any big enemies. . ."**

I'd say **"That's good!"**

But, **you know your difficult person?**

That **person I asked you to think of earlier?**

I mean they're **probably not even an enemy**

They're **probably not persecuting you**

But here's the deal, an **ENEMY** is someone you don't want to be around

So a difficult person qualifies

And God's call is to **LOVE THEM**

And I'll take it a step further. . .

God's call is to love them **"just as"** they are

What we tend to do, is to think, **"If they'll just change. . .**

"If they'll just change. . . then I'll love them"

But you know what?

That's not the way God loves us.

Look again at this verse. . .

"God is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

And He wants us to love the same way.

He says when you do this, it shows others that you are my children.

Love the difficult person. . . the difficult people in your life AS IS

I mean think about it. . .

What if God said **"I'll only love you after you get your junk together.**

I'll only love you after you change

I'll only love you after you stop being so bad to other people

Remember earlier I asked you to think about that difficult person in your life?

I don't know who you had on your list.

But I know this. . .

I know that **on somebody's list right now, I'm the difficult person**

And **on somebody's list right now you're the difficult person**

We're all difficult

I mean **we're just a bunch of difficult people**

And **when it comes to my relationship with God**, I'm a difficult person

Why?

Because I sin constantly

I mess up all the time

There are **things I should do, that I don't do**

And things **I shouldn't do, that I do.**

If God has a list of difficult people, you can bet that my name is on it.

I'm glad that God doesn't say **"Hey Rick you get your act together and then I'll love you."**

Instead God says **"Rick I'm going to love you "just as" you are**

Most people in this world are looking for people who will love them unconditionally

And the proof of our discipleship is when we are those people. .

The third thing that Paul tells us about resolving conflict is . . .

3. Leave Room For God

The next verse on your notes is not one you will see on a Hallmark card.

You won't find it in your next self-help book.

Paul lays it out here . . .

“Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the Lord.” Romans 12:19

There are some of you here today who had unspeakable things done to you when you were growing up.

You were abused, or you were bullied.

Some of you were lied to by someone who you trusted.

Some of you were cheated on by someone who said they would never cheat, or abandoned by someone who said they would never leave you.

You were wrongly criticized by someone who hurt you deeply.

You can keep replaying the tape of what that person did to you, or you can trust God to execute justice if justice needs to be executed.

1 Peter 3 says . . .

“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing.” 1 Peter 3:9

If it’s possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Think about that person you need to reach out to this week.

Send them an email

Make a phone call

Send a text

Get together with them

And just ask them this question . . .

“Hey, I want us to live at peace”

“I want us to resolve this conflict”

“How do you think we could do that”

You ask that question, and you will sleep better tonight.

Let’s pray.