Peacemaking in Practice

Conversations with
Marcel Serubungo



Welcome to Peacemaking in Practice

A disagreement about a seat in a church choir. A property boundary drawn in the wrong place. Two people who can no longer bring themselves to speak.

Some of the conflicts Marcel Serubungo describes in these conversations with Pastor Emily Tumbleson of Fellowship Missionary Church may sound surprisingly familiar.

Marcel has spent decades helping divided communities pursue peace and reconciliation, including in some of the world's most conflict-affected regions. Yet the lessons he shares aren't just for professional peacebuilders or people navigating extraordinary circumstances. They're for all of us, in our homes, churches, workplaces, and everyday relationships.

In this five-part series, Marcel and Emily talk about what it really takes to make peace. Together, they explore listening, curiosity, humility, accountability, forgiveness, and the grace of God.

Energy for Mission (EFM) supports Marcel's work through the Tuungane Project, which equips local church leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo to build resilient communities through nonviolent conflict resolution, reconciliation, and leadership development. It is made possible by individuals and faith communities who share this commitment. Learn more at energyformission.org.

MEET MARCEL SERUBUNGO



Marcel Serubungo is a Congolese pastor and peacebuilding leader who directs the Tuungane Project in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. He spent 18 years with World Relief working in Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan, and holds a master's degree in Sustainable Peace and Conflict Management. His work equips local churches to help divided communities pursue reconciliation, healing, and lasting peace.



Watch and Reflect

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Each short video has a companion reflection guide featuring Scripture, four discussion questions, and a prayer.

Watch on your own, with a friend, or as part of a small group. Pause at the end of each video to consider the questions or discuss them together. Use the accompanying guides to explore the Scripture and reflect more deeply.

These questions aren't a test, and there isn't always one right answer. Listen with curiosity, share only what you're comfortable sharing, and leave room for perspectives different from your own.

THE FIVE VIDEOS

1	A Peacemaker Is Not a Judge	Click here to watch → Password: **nogavel**
2	What's Really Going On?	Click here to watch → Password: **peelback**
3	When We Pretend There Isn't a Conflict	Click here to watch → Password: **umoja**
4	Beyond Forgiveness	Click here to watch → Password: **boundarystone**
5	Called to Peacemaking	Click here to watch → Password: **ambassador**

Can't click these links? Go to energyformission.org/peacemaking and enter the password for the video you want.



A Peacemaker Is Not a Judge

SCRIPTURE

Luke 12:13–14 (NIV)

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?"

REFLECT AND EXPLORE

1. In Luke 12, Jesus refuses to step into a family dispute to decide who is right. Think about the other stories you know about Jesus: when did he choose not to act as a judge when people tried to put him in that seat, and when did he actually confront people like one?

2. How does Marcel's picture of a peacemaker challenge what people usually expect from a strong leader?

3. Think about a space where you regularly step into conflict, with your kids, coworkers, family, or friend group. When you show up as a judge, and when you show up as a peacemaker, how do you think each one impacts the people involved?

4. Judges sometimes have to recuse themselves when their personal relationships compromise their impartiality. Think of a time someone acted like a judge in a close relationship, perhaps you. What might change if they stepped out of that role and began asking curious questions instead?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you recall that curiosity and desire for peace the next time a conflict or tension comes your way and you are reflexively tempted to hand down a judgment.

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What's Really Going On?

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:1–4 (NIV)

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

REFLECT AND EXPLORE

1. Philippians 2 calls us to look beyond our own interests to the interests of others. Allowing a small conflict to take up space takes humility and compassion, especially when we just want things to run smoothly. Beyond simply ending an argument, what deeper outcomes become possible when we slow down and make room for that conversation?

2. Marcel distinguishes between a person's stated position, underlying interests, and deeper needs. Why is it sometimes so difficult to say, or even recognize, what we actually need in the middle of a disagreement?

3. It would have been easy for the choir leaders to brush off a seating dispute, yet they brought it to the pastors for help. What stands out to you about that choice, and how do you discern when to handle a conflict directly versus when to invite outside support?

4. ***Reflect privately or share with care:*** "Overreaction" can be a dismissive label. When someone seems to be "overreacting," what if we became curious about what they're actually reacting to? Think of a time when you "overreacted." What was happening beneath the surface?

PRAYER

Invite God to bring to light a tension in your life, with someone else or inside yourself, and give you the compassion and curiosity to peel back the onion on what lies underneath.



When We Pretend There Isn't a Conflict

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:23–24 (NIV)

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Psalm 133:1–3 (NIV)

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

REFLECT AND EXPLORE

1. In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us to examine our hearts as we approach God and consider whether anyone has a conflict with us. Marcel talked about the face of conflict coming to mind and interfering in your spirit. Have you ever experienced that kind of nudge of conflict when you approach God?

2. Marcel notes that when someone insists, "I'm fine; I don't have a problem," the peacemaker is stopped in their tracks. Do you notice a tendency in yourself to say "I'm fine" out of avoidance, or can you think of a time you've been on the receiving end of that wall?

3. Psalm 133 tells us there is a deep blessing to be found in unity and togetherness, like the Swahili word *umoja*. In everyday life, what does genuine unity actually look like? What is it not?

4. ***Reflect privately or share with care:***
We often treat gossip as a harmless way to vent, even though it can quietly divide a community. Where have you noticed people taking sides, or felt yourself drawn into doing so? What might a peacemaker do differently?

PRAYER

Invite God to bring a face to mind, either someone with whom you have an unspoken conflict you've pushed out of sight, or a divided space where he is calling you to step in as a peacemaker.



Beyond Forgiveness

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:18 (NIV)

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

REFLECT AND EXPLORE

1. Romans 12:18 says to live at peace with everyone, "if it is possible, as far as it depends on you." Imagine a friend is struggling with a broken relationship and asks how to tell what is theirs to do and what isn't. What would you say to them?

2. Marcel names that reconciliation can be much harder than forgiveness, because stepping back into relationship takes intentional effort from both people. What have you experienced, or what can you imagine, that helps rebuild trust and reconnect after an offense?

3. In Marcel's story, Paul and Becho didn't just smooth things over. They paid what was owed and moved the boundary so that the harm was addressed. What would it have looked like if they had simply chosen to "keep the peace" rather than doing the work of true peacemaking?

4. ***Reflect privately or share with care:*** Marcel describes Christians who avoid greeting one another or change direction to avoid crossing paths. Is there someone in your church, family, or circle you find yourself sidestepping right now? What might a wise next step look like?

PRAYER

Invite God to show you where you can take responsibility, make things right, or nurture a relationship that has begun to heal. Ask for wisdom to know what is yours to do, and what isn't.



Called to Peacemaking

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17–20 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

REFLECT AND EXPLORE

1. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul calls us Christ's ambassadors, people who represent someone else rather than acting on their own authority. When we enter a conflict, whose interests are we most tempted to represent? What might it look like to represent Christ instead?

2. As a child, Marcel ran straight into fights between his peers, sometimes taking hits for intervening. Today, after decades of experience, he asks the Holy Spirit for wisdom before entering conflict. What do you learn from holding those two pictures of Marcel together? How do courage and discernment work together in peacemaking?

3. Marcel reminds us that we don't have to make peace alone. God has placed people with particular gifts of peacemaking in our communities. Who comes to mind when you think of someone with that gift? What makes them stand out to you?

4. ***Reflect privately or share with care:*** Emily acknowledges that not everyone grew up with the models of peacemaking Marcel had. What was the culture around conflict like in your family or community growing up? Who, if anyone, has modeled healthy peacemaking for you since?

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit for the courage to answer God's call to make peace, the wisdom to recognize when and how to act, and the humility to receive help from others along the way.

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