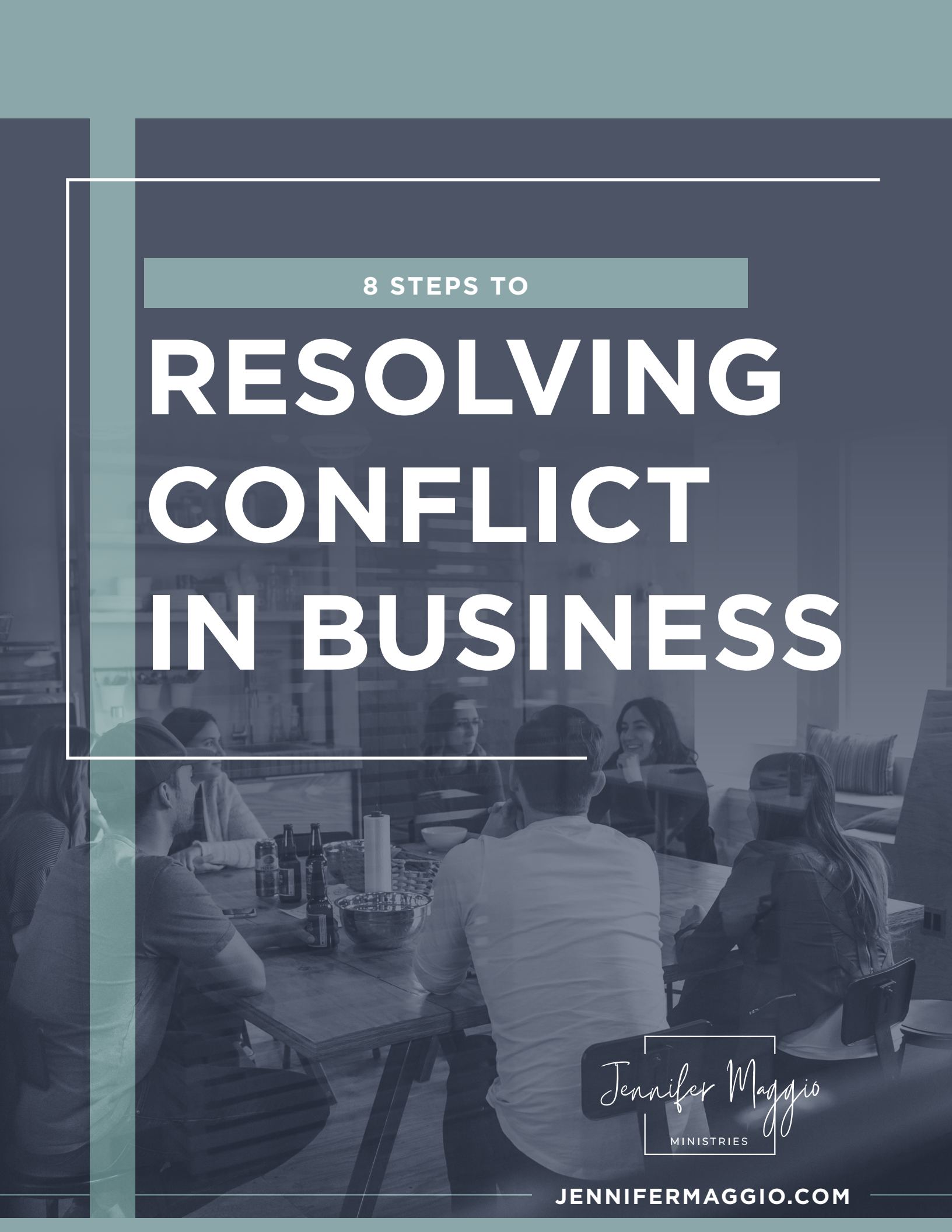




8 STEPS TO

RESOLVING CONFLICT IN BUSINESS

Jennifer Maggio

MINISTRIES

JENNIFERMAGGIO.COM

8 STEPS TO

RESOLVING CONFLICT IN BUSINESS

Perhaps nothing is more frustrating than working for an organization, manager, or leader who will not address conflict. The difficulties of working on a team where one player is not carrying their weight can lead to immense frustration in the workforce (*or volunteer team*). It can lead to many problems in the workforce, including unnecessary turnover and undue tension, to say the least. Sadly, many leaders were never trained to handle conflict effectively. Therefore, they tend to avoid it at all costs, making the baby elephant in the room grow to exponential proportions.

Conflict only gets bigger when unresolved. I laugh now when I think about my early years of ministry, and my erroneous ideals that hiring a bunch of Christians would likely forego conflict altogether. How wrong I was! It didn't take long for me to realize that conflict will arise quickly, and having a formal policy in place helps all understand procedures and expectations, minimizing overall frustration. As I seasoned and matured in my role, *I realized that while conflict will come, it can also be an excellent opportunity to give God glory in the way we respond.*

As leaders, the better we handle conflict, the fewer opportunities Satan has to create division in our lives and companies. Thankfully, the Bible has much to say on conflict resolution. Today, when an employee wants to sit with me and discuss conflict among the team, I pull out our conflict resolution policy and ensure they have followed all steps, including asking specifics about dates and times. *I want my team to know I have no problems addressing and resolving conflict. Still, I also want to empower them to resolve issues among themselves whenever possible.*



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The way we treat others, even when they may seem unlovable or unreasonable, shines the light of

Jesus for others. It gives others hope. When conflict happens in our lives, there are several things we must do. Here are eight steps I've learned through the years that have minimized conflict in our organization.

STEP 1: CONSIDER THE “WHY.”

Understanding why conflict may be present helps us consider how others may be feeling and how to respond. It will make it easier for us to respond in love, maturity, and kindness when we take the time to evaluate why conflict has arisen, particularly when someone has been relatively easy to work with previously. There are many reasons for the “why.” *Below are a few examples:*

- **INSECURITY**

Am I insecure about something in this relationship or situation? Is the other party insecure? How can I work towards making myself/them more secure through affirming their work performance, role on the team, etc.?

- **MISUNDERSTANDING**

Do I understand fully what is being asked of me? Am I quick to offense when perhaps the intention of the conversation or email wasn't at all offensive?

- **SATAN**

Is Satan at work, trying to cause division in our relationship, company, or ministry opportunity? Is this a tactic he is utilizing to keep the team or mission stunted in growth?

- **EXHAUSTION**

Am I simply exhausted? Is the other party exhausted? Are they doing too much? Are we working long hours? Is either party balancing many personal and professional demands?

When the general work environment is good, and conflict arises unexpectedly, it is often easy to consider the why and simply move on. Taking the time to consider the other party's position will help minimize long-term impact.

STEP 2: WAIT A MINIMUM OF 48 HOURS FOR ANY RESPONSE.

Proverbs 15:18 tells us that a hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. *Hot tempers and quick words rarely resolve conflict.* Don't immediately take a problem to the person you are hurt or upset with. Do not immediately spout off another email. Do not

march into their office to confront their intentions. Allow time to pray that the Lord will give you wisdom and the right words to say. Sometimes, waiting will make the problem seem so much smaller. Often, conflict that felt quite weighty in one work week wasn't near as much in the next. *Words cannot be taken back, so taking the time to be prayerful can save the issue from evolving into a more intense conflict.*

STEP 3: ISSUE THE SAME GRACE YOU WANT FROM OTHERS.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). The first question I will ask regarding any conflict is what efforts have been made by both parties to resolve the conflict. *We must forgive quickly and give grace to those who may have hurt us with their words or actions. This is how we want to be treated and is an expectation of Believers in Scripture.* Has each employee made every effort to create a bond of peace? Is it easily trackable?

STEP 4: TAKE YOUR OFFENSE DIRECTLY TO THEM.

Matthew 18:15 tells us, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." Conflict must be resolved directly between the two parties. We must talk directly to the person about the situation. Do not talk to others. Do not involve coworkers. Do not solicit twelve opinions on the matter. This only makes the problem worse. *When the offense is taken directly to the other party, the purpose should always be for resolution.* The goal is always resolution, not to have the last word or to be right. It is also important to note that we do not have the right to evaluate someone else's heart to determine that they "just want to keep the conflict going" or "were trying to start trouble." If they apologize or admit wrongdoing, it's best to accept it and move on.



STEP 5: SPEAK LIFE.

The power of life and death flows from our tongues, as we know from Proverbs 18:21. I am sure that most Christians do not understand the brevity of that statement. The weight of what comes from our mouths matters. We cannot speak negatively about a situation or a person and prevent it from growing. *We cannot curse them with our lips and expect resolution to flow easily.* The words that come from your mouth to others and about others are essential. We must train all

subordinates under us with this same principle.

STEP 6: BATTLE YOUR THOUGHTS.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

What is being meditated on? Are you rehearsing, over and over again, the offense, the perceived intentions, the reason this employee is always causing trouble? Meditate on God's truth, not what happened or what she said. It is essential that we refrain from continually replaying in our minds what was said or done to us. That only makes the problem grow bigger. However, when we focus on God, His Word, and His truth about us (and the other person), the problem gets smaller and more manageable.

STEP 7: BRING THE PROBLEM TO AN AUTHORITY FIGURE.

After all efforts have been made through the steps above, I give my employees permission to bring the issue to me after all previous steps have been followed. *(Note: Exceptions are obviously made for dangerous or abusive situations.)* [Matthew 18:16](#) gives us a guide to how to resolve conflict after one has brought the problem directly to the individual. Permission is then granted to bring it before authority. I am careful to hear both parties out, understand where conflict can be resolved, and also ascertain if consequences need to be implemented in some cases. I am prayerful, attempting to be wise and fair.

STEP 8: CONSIDER THAT IT MAY BE TIME FOR A CHANGE.

Seasons come and go. The calling of God on someone's life may plant them under your leadership for a season but then evolve them elsewhere later. *It is okay for people to be a blessing coming into your business and be a blessing going out of your business.* Have the hard conversations when people need to move on and their time is up with you. Challenge them when they've outgrown their role or perhaps have become too difficult to work with. Do not be afraid to make difficult decisions when conflict resolution necessitates it.

MEET THE AUTHOR

JENNIFER MAGGIO

Jennifer Maggio is an award-winning author and speaker whose personal journey through homelessness, abuse, and single parenting is leaving audiences around the globe riveted. At 19, Maggio was living in government housing on food stamps and welfare as she struggled to raise two children alone. She shares with great openness her pain, mistakes, and journey to find hope in Christ. She ultimately became an 11-time Circle of Excellence winner in Corporate America, founder of a national nonprofit, author of multiple books, and national single parenting expert. Her passion for the Lord is contagious, and her story has been used to inspire thousands around the globe. For more info, visit her website at jennifermaggio.com.

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