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# Working with the Opposite Sex

Understanding male-female differences and how they complement each other is essential in ministry and team leadership. Many hurts and frustrations can be avoided.

## Exercise

Work on a ministry project with members of the opposite sex.

## Aims

1. To understand how men and women approach ministry and teamwork differently.
2. To learn to anticipate the different reactions to people and team processes
3. To read non-verbal communication in groups
4. To identify the different speech patterns of men and women
5. To build the teamwork around the strengths of men and women
6. To be able to analyse when team problems have been caused by male-female misunderstandings

## Trainers

- Work through the exercises on the following pages with Apprentices as often as needed.
- Help Apprentices make adjustments in their working relationships with the other gender. Observe that these adjustments are followed through.

## Resources

*Me Jane, You Tarzan*, Sally Zanetic and Christopher Jeffery (Harper Collins: 1999)

## Exercise 1

After a team meeting or Bible study group, analyse the reactions, attitudes, speech and behavior of the men and women, using the table below. Add your own characteristics. Discuss your observations and draw some implications for men and women working together.

Characteristic	Men	Women
Task-centred		
Aggressive		
Flexible approach to plans		
Married to own ideas		
Drawing others into discussion		
Natural leader		
Encourager		
Doctrinaire		
High contributor		
Low contributor		
Volunteer for work		
Must win the argument		
Burdened by the ministry load		
Practical and realistic		
Concerned for the person more than the outcome		

## Exercise 2

The following information has been taken from *Me Jane, You Tarzan*, by Sally Zanetic and Christopher Jeffery (pg 52), in which they analyse how men and women use language in the workplace. Use this analysis to review a recent team or Bible study meeting.

**Language laws of the jungle**

<b>Jane's Laws</b>	<b>Tarzan's Laws</b>
<p>Engage others in the discussion</p> <p>Connect your statements to those of previous speakers</p> <p>Initiate topics for others by asking questions</p> <p>Communicate doubtfully – speak in tentative ways to leave the door open for others to express their opinions</p>	<p>Dominate others in discussion</p> <p>Disconnect your statements from previous speakers by using them as a jump off point to introduce a different topic.</p> <p>Interrupt topics of others by changing the subject to the one you want to talk about.</p> <p>Communicate definitely – speak in assertive absolute ways that close the door on alternative opinions, and challenge views expressed by others.</p>
<p>Use discussion to achieve greater equality within the group.</p> <p>Emphasise similarities by relating matching experiences.</p> <p>Remove power differences through more equal distribution of talk time.</p> <p>Acknowledge and build on each others ideas.</p>	<p>Use discussion to assert greater status within the group.</p> <p>Emphasise differences by respecting independence of others.</p> <p>Emphasise power differences by speaking to exhibit superior knowledge of skills.</p> <p>Do not acknowledge previous individual contributions, speak impersonally and address your comments to the group as a whole.</p>
<p>Use speech to understand and share feelings.</p> <p>Acknowledge and encourage expression of feelings through active listening, probing questions and supportive comments.</p> <p>Downplay superiority by taking care to avoid others losing face.</p>	<p>Use speech to solve practical problems.</p> <p>Do not acknowledge or encourage expression of feelings – focus on getting or giving information.</p> <p>Emphasise superiority and control by giving advice and providing solutions.</p>