

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Game Plan: The Men's 30-Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity*  
Joe Dallas (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005)

Joe Dallas writes from a thoroughly biblical perspective. He uses much more Scripture (and uses it well) than most other Christian “help” books. His strategy incorporates the daily disciplines of Bible study and prayer. He calls sin, sin. He clearly explains the need for every person to come to salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Repentance is accurately described and coached, noting action steps that prove and flow from genuine repentance. Stopping the addiction is not the main goal—loving God wholeheartedly is. He warns that a believer should not identify himself by his addiction, but by his identity as a redeemed child of God. He cautions that if you need professional help, make sure that your counselor counsels from a biblical perspective. Even a so-called “Christian” counselor needs to be asked about his church attendance, his use of the Bible in counseling, and how he approaches Christian men in sexual sin. He labels sexual sin a form of idolatry.

Joe has been in the ministry of counseling and seminars dealing with men in sexual sin since 1987. In the Introduction he lays out his own story of destruction starting with exposure to porn and sexual abuse at age 8, indulgence in porn and experimentation into his teen years, salvation at age 16, full-time ministry at age 18, and then a fall into six years of pornography, prostitution, fornication, homosexuality, and alcoholism. In just four non-voyeuristic pages he establishes his credibility as one who knows what he’s talking about.

The book offers five primary goals (p. xix):

1. *To abstain from the sexual sin that’s dominated you*
2. *To repair damaged relationships and make restitution*
3. *To maintain a permanent structure of discipline and accountability*
4. *To successfully manage sexual temptations when they arise*
5. *To correct unhealthy ways of relating*

“Playing” the Game involves a five-part process described in the acrostic, R.O.U.T.E. Each of the steps is supported by three “reading” chapters and three “action plan” chapters. R.O.U.T.E. means Repentance, Orders, Understanding, Training, and Endurance. In the thirty day journey, the “Player” needs to allot thirty minutes per day for the reading/action steps, fifteen minutes a day for Bible reading and prayer, recommitment, and motive review (your daily “meds”), and several hours per week for a group meeting and an accountability partner meeting—your allies for the next six months. Suggested accountability questions are (page 63—men are encouraged to craft their own five questions which directly target their unique issues):

1. *Did you look at pornography this week?*
2. *Did you masturbate this week?*
3. *Did you keep up with your disciplines this week?*

4. *Did you and your wife pray together this week?*
5. *Did you let yourself look inappropriately at other women this week?*
6. *Have you answered these questions honestly?*

Scores of specific actions are described in book for separating from temptations, changing daily structures, confronting sin in friends, resisting temptation, and meeting with an accountability partner. Masturbation is addressed with the concluding assessment: *I'm convinced masturbation is usually, if not always, inherently wrong.* Chapter 11 dealing with confession is invaluable in helping a man unpack how much and in how many ways he has hurt his wife, and how to confess to her and begin making restitution to her and others injured by his sin. Pages 215-216 in the “Questions” appendix answers the “should I tell my wife” question (the right answer is “Yes”).

The second half of the book addresses the ongoing power of temptation—“*And just what did you think the world and the devil were going to do while you kept getting better? Congratulate you with a telegram?*” (page 90) Joe explains the environment we live in (sex-saturated), helps the reader identify the external triggers that arouse and tempt him, and coaches ways to reduce the triggers by managing the environment. Chapter 13 has fine material on understanding the devil’s methods of taking men down—*We are not ignorant of his devices.* (II Corinthians 2:11). Chapter 19 focuses on tactile “Temptation-Resistance Techniques” through the lens of continuum of *Stimulation, Entertainment, and Indulgence.* Distractions are confronted with *Shifting, Breathing, and Reciting.* (pages 141-142) See page 145 for an example of “reciting.” The practical power of sanctification (my body is “Thine,” not “mine”) is unusually well-explained and well-illustrated in chapter 21, *Entitlement.*

The book closes with issues surrounding possible relapses and the finding of my life’s broader purpose. The idea is that I was made for a purpose much bigger than getting “sober” from sexual sin. I was made to be a servant of God displaying utter devotion and obedience in every area of life. A final appendix addresses FAQs ranging from defining sexual addiction to stopping masturbation.

This is now my number-one book to recommend and hand to men dealing with sexual sin. Highly-motivated men will take the challenge and tear into the thirty-day-challenge-pace. For other men, the book will serve well as a thirty-week journey to wholeness, with weekly meetings and working on one chapter per week. The book can be done solo by a much disciplined man, but doing it as a weekly small group and/or with a one-on-one accountability partner is the ideal.

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