

THE DEFENDERS USA

An Introduction to The Game Plan By Joe Dallas

Excerpted from *The Game Plan: The Men's 30-Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity* by Joe Dallas (Thomas Nelson 2005) Amended exclusively for The Defender's website. All rights reserved. This material cannot be reproduced in any form without express written permission from the author.

Since you're reviewing this website and considering a pledge to purity, my guess is you're either in crises over your sexual behavior, or you want to avoid ever having that sort of crises.

And why shouldn't you? You've got other plans, after all - a family, a home, or a certain type of job or career. Or maybe earning a degree is on your list, or some other project or achievement. At the very least, I figure you want someone to love, decent health and enough money to pay the bills. And by now, you've probably attained some of those goals, so I'll also assume you've steered your life in a certain direction and, to some extent, you've succeeded.

You have expectations, too, especially of yourself. You expect to be a certain type of man - not perfect, but the kind you can respect; a guy who lives up to his beliefs, has a decent reputation, and is the sort of friend, father or husband who makes his loved ones feel safe and cared for. And if you *do* ever wind up having any deep, dark secrets, you figure they'll be the sort that aren't really *that* deep and dark.

Plans and expectations – since you've got both, the last thing you want is to see them derailed by a moral failure. So maybe you're here to make sure that never happens.

Then again, maybe it already has. Maybe it started so long ago it's hard to recall how or when, but at some point you discovered It. We usually refer to "it" as sexual sin or "acting out", but however you label it, it's the thing that's now disrupting your life so badly you're willing to start *The Game Plan*.

The form "it" takes varies from man to man. For many, it's a combination of pornography and sexual fantasies. Others find it in a prostitute's embrace, or in strip clubs, the forbidden thrill of adulterous or pre-marital sex, anonymous encounters, phone sex, cyber-sex or chat rooms. Maybe you've practiced it in less common ways, through some habit or private ritual you're deeply ashamed of and have never admitted to anyone. (Although heaven knows, there really is nothing new under the sun, and I can guarantee you've neither discovered nor created a new sin.)

But whatever its form, it become part of your life, despite your plans and expectations, because in its own strange way, it *works*.

When you discovered it, you found something that delivered both meaning and ecstasy. Now, *meaning* isn't normally a word we associate with immorality, but think

about it: there really can be profound meaning in actions that are completely wrong. Just because they're meaningful, that doesn't make them right. But just because they're wrong, that doesn't remove the sense of meaning that so often goes with them. In plain language, if sexual sin wasn't deeply meaningful in some way, men wouldn't indulge it.

Masturbating to internet pornography, for example, can bring a man comfort, thrill, power and escape, all of which create a meaningful (though unhealthy) experience. When you add ecstasy to the mix— the anticipation of seeing the porn, the adrenaline rush that comes with viewing erotic images, the heightened sensations building up to orgasm, then the orgasm itself – then you've got yourself a powerful product. Morally wrong? Sure. Addictive; even destructive? Absolutely, but powerful, nonetheless. And when a customer tries a product delivering both meaning and ecstasy, there's a good chance he'll go back for seconds.

But it didn't stop at "seconds", did it? Maybe it became a fairly regular part of your routine. Oh, there may have been times – months, even years - when you stopped. But then it kept returning or, I should say, you kept returning to it. It was reliable and ever present, like an old friend who never said "no." And so it became not only a secret vice, but a secret *device* as well – a product you've relied on for comfort, connection and escape.

But knowing your behavior was wrong hasn't stopped you from repeating it. And repeating it did not, at least in the beginning, ruin your plans and expectations. While nursing your sin, you may have also built up that family, career and life you were aiming for. The sin didn't keep it from happening. There's a good chance, in fact, you've told yourself, "This is wrong, but it isn't *that* wrong! If I'm careful and discreet, it won't interfere with the rest of my life. I am, after all, a good man in general, and even good men can have a few bad habits."

Then something happened. You got caught, perhaps, or at least had a close call. Maybe your situation is worse - an arrest, a sexually transmitted disease, professional or financial damage – and now your life's been thrown into endless summersaults. Or maybe you're just exhausted from the lying, double-mindedness and shame that comes from prolonged sexual sin. Whatever the case, a crises of truth has gotten your attention, slapping you in the face with a realization: *This has to stop; I have to change.*

Your Life Is Being Interrupted

I say all of this because I know we don't usually ask for help unless a fire's been lit under us. So am I assuming too much in saying you're a man in crises, either because of what he's done or what he fears doing? I doubt it.

And since you can see by this website's content that it's designed from a Biblical perspective, I feel safe in also assuming you're a Christian. In that case, your crises springs not just from circumstance, but from deep within as well.

Because you know better. You know God, you know something about His will for your life, and you know His will can't include behavior the Bible so strongly and specifically condemns. In light of that, you know what you need to *avoid* doing. Or, if you're already doing it, you know what you need to *stop*.

You need to stop using pornography. You need to break off the adulterous, casual, or pre-marital relationship. You need to distance yourself from the actions that have created your crises, actions that may have been meaningful, but have also done

more damage than you ever thought they would. You need to stop, and you need to stop now.

But even knowing that may not have stopped you so far. Maybe (in fact, probably) you don't need to know *what* to stop doing. You need to know *how* to stop doing it.

I've yet to meet a Christian in sexual sin who didn't know what he should or shouldn't do. Most of us, after all, have spent years hearing that sexual contact before or apart from marriage is wrong. So it's not the knowledge of right from wrong you're looking for, but rather, a plan - a game plan that will map out a practical, effective way to recover (and keep) your sexual integrity.

Now you have one. *The Game Plan* is designed for the Christian man who's tempted by sexual sin, or who's gotten involved in it but is now ready to walk away from it, and who wants a practical, Biblically based plan to guide him.

Since 1987 I've had the honor of working with men like that, through private counseling and retreat seminars. I've admired their courage in admitting they had a problem, and I've learned from them, as together we've found answers and tools. I've also noticed similarities in their lives and circumstances, four of which you might relate to.

First, their introduction to sexual sin came early in life. Lost innocence has been a common theme: childhood exposure to pornography, pre-adolescent sexual experiments, or even molestation. They saw too much too soon, and explored too early. Masturbation, porn and sexual fantasies were incorporated into their lifestyle, and while many never had sex with another person until their adulthood, many others, in fact, were promiscuous while still teenagers. They found *It* while they were young; they indulged it frequently.

Second, despite their sexual behavior, they had a genuine and abiding faith in Christ. Whether raised in the church or converted later, these were not men who just pretended to be Christians. They were true believers: born again, belonging to a local congregation and, in many ways, committed. I haven't needed to share the gospel with them, since they already knew and responded to it long before we met. Most were active in their churches; many were elders, music ministers, deacons or board members. More than a few have been pastors.

Which leads to a third common characteristic: their conversion experience, though genuine, did not make their sexual problems disappear. All too often they thought it would, so they expected God to provide a sort of microwave experience, rapidly cooking the lust and sinful tendencies right out of them.

But it didn't happen that way. So when those tendencies returned (if indeed they ever left) they decided they must be doing something wrong. "If I'm still tempted to commit the sexual sins I committed before", they reasoned, "then I lack faith, or I'm not trying hard enough, or there's something radically flawed about me as a man."

They're wrong, of course, but the silence in the church about sexual sin only confirms their fears. How often, really, do we hear Christians talk openly about the problem of sexual temptation? When did you last hear, even in the privacy of small prayer and Bible study groups, someone say, "I'm wrestling with sexual temptations; please pray for me?" And when sexual sin becomes a sermon topic, isn't it more often than not referred to as a problem *outside* the church, rather than a common weakness we ourselves need to *guard* against?

All of which can leave a man thinking he's the only Christian with sexual temptations, which doubles his shame. The shame encourages his isolation and secrecy,

and those are twin elements that make a man's heart into a lonely place - dark and fertile - where sexual sin can take root, grow and thrive.

It's thrived in so many of the men I've worked with, sometimes for years, until the fourth characteristic finally came into play: *exposure* leading to *motivation*.

Virtually every man I've worked with has had a crisis, whether in his conscience or his circumstance, that forced the problem into the light. And with that exposure came fear, anger, or deep dissatisfaction. These, in turn, became strong incentives for change. So by the time I've met these men, they've usually been highly motivated, humbled by their sin, teachable, and ready to work.

If these characteristics come close to describing you, and if you, too, are motivated and ready to work, then we'll look forward to walking with you into a healthier, godly lifestyle.

Follow what I call *The Game Plan*, and things *will* change. That's not because it offers a quick fix, but because it offers the right steps. I've walked it, taught it, and seen it in action. It's detailed in my book *The Game Plan – The Men's Thirty Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity*, which was released by W Publishing in 2005. It's been taught as a seminar for years, and is now available in both book and group format as well. More important, though, is the fact it's drawn from, and sticks to, Biblical principles and practices.

So what exactly *is* The Game Plan? Let's define it by first defining The Game, then by naming the phases of the game and explaining the plan we'll follow while walking through each phase.

Defining The Game

The Game is the contest you enter into when you commit yourself to purity. When you regularly give in to sexual sin, you in essence "go with the flow" of the world, the flesh and even Satan. No contest there - you surrendered. Paul describes this surrender pretty well to the Ephesians when he refers to their past:

"Wherein in time past you walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

(Ephesians 2: 2-3)

In other words, when you compromise, you cooperate with the Enemy. But when you turn away from that cooperation and enter The Game, you initiate a life long battle. Your flesh still exists, after all, the world is still a minefield of temptations, and Satan is alive and well and more determined than ever to snare you. So by deciding to change, you've offended all three, and you can expect to be duking it out with them for as long as you, and they, exist. So let's accept this hard truth right off the bat: When you pursue godliness by rejecting sexual sin, life gets tough, because now you're fighting the very thing you used to indulge.

I like the way Paul puts it:

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” (Romans 6: 13)

By yielding your members in a completely different way, you’re switching from passive compliance *with* sin to a race that now requires you to go *against* it. As the author of Hebrews puts it:

“---let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”
(Hebrews 12: 1)

And again, Paul comments:

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that you may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things ---“ (I Corinthians 9: 24-25)

Temperate in all things – as in self controlled; consistent. That’s an athlete’s mindset. If you’ve been out of shape by letting a behavior rule you, then you, and *it*, will get used to it being in charge. But now you’re going to reject its authority in your life, which is like booting out a dictator. (Hint: Those guys don’t go down easily.) So naturally, things will get a little rough when you play The Game.

Now, in playing, you have five primary goals:

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.

These are the goals we’re referring to. Attain them, and you’ve won The Game. But as you can see, these are goals you not only attain, but *maintain* as well. So you’re a player for life. It is, after all, a lifestyle change you’re looking for. You’ll attain it by following The Game Plan; you’ll maintain it for life by incorporating the Plan daily.

“Isn’t This Struggle Too Serious To Be Called a *Game*?”

I guess using the term “Game” does require an explanation, so let’s step back and look at the broader picture, and where the idea of a Game fits into it.

When we talk about growing beyond sin, we're really talking about the Biblical concept of *sanctification*. After being born again, or *saved*, we're continually, by the Spirit of God, being transformed into more Christ-like men:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (II Corinthians 3: 18)

We're also talking about spiritual warfare, mortification of the flesh, trials, temptations and God's chastening, all of which are guaranteed in Scripture as part of the Christian life. We don't normally think of them as games. They're hard, at times, and serious.

But to call something a Game doesn't necessarily make light of it. In his letter to Corinth, when Paul compared Christian living to the Masteries, he was referring to a series of contests that were technically “games” but were, in fact, taken very seriously by the culture they were played in. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, in their excellent “Commentary on the Whole Bible”, have this to say about the games Paul referred to:

“The Isthmian games were of course well known, and a subject of patriotic pride to the Corinthians, who lived in the immediate neighborhood. These periodical games were to the Greeks rather a passion than a mere amusement: hence their suitableness as an image of Christian earnestness.”

Sanctification and the overcoming of sin can be viewed as negative, dreary aspects of Christian living. But I'd rather see them the way Paul did: as challenging and, at times, even exciting. And as a passion, like the commentators said, not just an amusement. So to me, the term “Game” is an upbeat, masculine, and accurate way of viewing what you're trying to do as a man who wants to live a better life. It's a war, certainly; a heartache, frequently. But it's also a noble contest; a race we're encouraged to run; a game we're privileged to play. So I hope you'll find the concept of The Game to be both acceptable and helpful.

So Where Will All This Get Me?

I asked the same question when I began seeing a Christian counselor shortly after my own repentance in 1984. I wanted results and change, but I hadn't a clue how they were going to happen. So during our first session, my counselor briefed me on what I could expect by promising me six things. I still have the notes I took that day, and they go something like this:

1. You'll get a better understanding of the impact your sexual behavior has had on you - on your mind, heart and body – and on the people you love.
2. You'll develop a concise plan to follow to help you separate yourself from that behavior and *stay* separated from it.
3. You'll get a management plan to help you cope with the temptations that will return, a plan that will include a daily and weekly structure that you'll make a part of your life.

4. You'll get tools with which to rebuild whatever relationships have been damaged by your behavior, as well as tools you'll use to correct ongoing relational problems.
5. You'll learn techniques you can use when sexual temptations come.
6. You'll understand, and deal with, the pain in your life that may have made you more susceptible to sexual sin.

That's what you can realistically expect if you follow this plan, and I trust that's what you want, and that you're willing to put some work into it. What you bring to the table is your motivation, your willingness to invest a in this program, and enough humility to be teachable. Bring those, and this approach will, by God's grace, bring the insight and the tools, and it will be an honor partnering with you in this effort. So welcome to The Game. Let's play.

-Joe Dallas, author of The Game Plan:
The Men's 30-Day Strategy for Attaining Sexual Integrity
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