

Jan Kern's *Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love—A Journey Out of False Intimacy* is an engaging, warm, disturbing, and powerful look at the journey from brokenness to healing. With compelling tenderness, Jan writes about the harsh realities of the pain and heartache of sexual experience outside of God's design, and does so without being preachy or shallow. This book is real, and important. Offering hope to those who are in the midst of sexual wandering and confusion, and a wake-up call to those dabbling on the edges, *Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love* is a gift of grace.

—Chap Clark, senior editor, *YouthWorker Journal*;
author, *Hurt: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*

It's refreshing to read a book for teens on the issue of sex that is not only frank, but also compassionate and insightful. Jan doesn't try to fix teens, but instead, through the power of story, shows that there are other options. She offers choices that are empowering and life-changing.

—T. Suzanne Eller, international speaker and author;
founder, Real Teen Faith ministries

Having sex before you're married is one of the biggest lies of the world. I once chose to believe it, and then I became a Christian and discovered that God has a different plan for my life. But when I started reading this book, I realized I hadn't fully dealt with my past and still needed healing. Jan's book has helped me look at the lies and my past and find truth, peace, and love from God himself. *Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love* changed my life.

—Sherry H., age 19, student

Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love is powerful, convicting, and raw! It spoke so much truth into my own life, and it is one of those books you just can't put down. Its story-style testimonies are so powerful and real they made me take a deeper look into my own life and the standards I set for myself concerning sex and purity. The book is a must read. . . . The outcome from reading it is walking out of darkness and into truth and light, and it is backed by God's Word told in ways young adults like myself can relate to.

—Ricky Chenoweth, age 20, college student

In *Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love—A Journey Out of False Intimacy*, Jan takes a raw and honest look at the angst of adolescence that's rarely seen in Christian books for teenagers. Not only does she delve into the core issues, she offers practical hope that will connect with this generation of students.

—Ginny Olson, author, *Teenage Girls: Exploring Issues Adolescent Girls Face and Strategies to Help Them*

Seduced by Sex : Saved by Love is a must read for every teen, youth worker, and parent. This compelling personal story mixed with compassionate insight and thoughtful personal application has something for all of us. Whether you're struggling with the seductive lies of the world, the desire to fit in, or watching friends make painful decisions and want to help, you'll find a wealth of wisdom here.

—Pam Stenzel, author, *Sex Has a Price Tag: Discussions About Sensuality, Spirituality, and Self Respect*

With this book, Jan peers into the hearts of teenagers and young adults and exposes the lies that they—that all of us—are prone to believe. She displays an uncanny insight into how so many are slowly seduced into a lifestyle that strips them of their innocence and hope for meaningful love. This book helps unwrap the mystery of recovering from these lies and builds hope into the lives of its readers.

—Garth Heckman, author, *Burn This Book: Ignite a New Life with God*

Jan has entered deeply into topics most worthy of exploration: the longing of one's soul to be authentically accepted and loved, and the fear of never finding those things. In *Seduced by Sex: Saved by Love*, she clearly shows that desperate people do desperate things, but that there also is a way through and out of the entrapments of this generation's overly sexualized culture. There is hope to be found in Suzy's story—a promise for fulfillment that ends, as it was intended to be in her beginning, with God's design and imprint on her very human heart.

—Susan Hicks, marriage and family therapist,
Christian Encounter Ministries

Suzy's courageous story richly illustrates her journey from brokenness into restoration and celebration of what God intended for her best. Jan Kern pulls back the curtain and reveals, through story, the truth behind today's experiences of love and sexuality, illustrating what we often experience when making our own choices—betrayal, heartache, disillusionment, and despair. She offers biblical guidelines and a fresh look into the loving heart of our creator, who forgives us and wants to heal us in our brokenness. In this book I feel I've found a tool of hope to share with teens and young adults who need a bridge to God's heart from the wreckage of their sexual pasts.

—Linda Carlos, marriage and family therapist, Elk Grove, California

SEDUCED BY SEX : SAVED BY LOVE





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SEDUCED BY SEX : SAVED BY LOVE

A LIVE FREE BOOK

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DEDICATION

To the CEM students . . .

Thank you for showing me what it means to powerfully live out Christ's transforming love. When you really "get it," there's no stopping you.

Keep living free.



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'I WAS SEDUCED . . . '

I WAS SEDUCED BY SEX.

I didn't know it then, but I'm painfully aware of it now.

I wish I could have learned from someone else's mistakes, but being stubborn, I chose to suffer from my own failures. Unfortunately, the consequences with sex aren't the same as when you don't study well enough for your SATs and miss out on your preferred college. Or mess up at school and get kicked out—jeopardizing your diploma. Or injure yourself taking that sweet jump at the skateboard park, ruining your chance for a football scholarship.

Although serious enough, none of these compare to the impact sex can have on our lives outside of marriage. Satan is a scheming, condemning liar. He tantalizes us with sex before marriage, making it appear as normal stuff, harmless fun. Yet when we give in to his schemes, he'll spend the rest of our lives working to condemn us because we gave in.

That's what he did to me—or tried to. For twenty-five years—what could have been some of the best years of my life—I let him torment me with shame and regret. And that weight harmed all my relationships—with God, with my husband, with my children, and with my friends. Yet I didn't know why. Now I do. And so I share it with you—because I'd rather you learn from my mistakes than suffer through your own.

God has taught me a lot on my journey, including two very compelling lessons. First, sex before marriage is not the same as sex inside of marriage. That's what all the messages out there try to convince us of—that it's just as good, it's just as exciting—

but it's simply not true. Sex outside of marriage is pretty much opposite of what God planned for sex when shared within marriage. And the truth is that sex outside of marriage has great power to ruin sex inside of marriage.

Not only is it *not* the same sex, it will keep you from having the kind of passionate, wild sex that God has planned for you within a marriage. Struggling to believe this? I know it's hard to imagine right now, when you're not married. But I know this is true because it happened to me. And I'm not alone. Now that God uses my mess to help other people, I hear my story repeated over and over by others who have traveled a similar path. God wants you to have great sex in marriage—Satan doesn't. It's as simple as that.

The second lesson God has taught me is that although sex isn't worse than other sins, it is different. Yes, God can forgive all sin—even sexual sin. But in 1 Corinthians 6:18, he spells it out clearly: All other sins are committed outside the body, but sex is the only sin that we commit against *ourselves*.

Although forgiveness is an essential component with sexual sin, it's not the only one. The other necessary piece of our journey to wholeness is healing. Sex isn't just a physical act; it involves the spirit, soul, and emotions. I give *all* of myself to someone else. And outside of marriage that means I wound all of myself and all of someone else. I'm not talking about a nasty bruise that lasts a couple of weeks. The wounds from sex can linger for a lifetime.

If you let them. I could have, but I didn't.

God uses healing, along with forgiveness, to restore us to wholeness—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It's a miracle, I know, but God is the master of miracles.

For me, reading this book was like reading my story . . . except it's a story that belongs to another. Putting the messages of this book into practice might save your future marriage. Doing the same could even save your life.

I was seduced by sex . . . but saved by love—God's amazing love.

—Barbara Wilson, author, *The Invisible Bond:
How to Break Free from Your Sexual Past*

GETTING THE DIALOGUE GOING . . .

SEX. What a *huge* topic.

Let's talk about it. Yes, openly. And maybe somewhat differently than you have before.

Let's look at it through the true story of Suzy, whose search for acceptance and belonging led her into the arms of false intimacy. Yet hers *is* a love story—one of God pursuing her in her weariness and pain. One in which God helped her discover the amazing power of true intimacy.

But let's look at sex through the stories of others too—because each of our encounters in grappling with the ideas and experiences in our sexuality is unique.

Let's talk about the crazy, distorted version of sex that is in our faces every day, and how we can regain and hold on to a truer picture of what it's really all about.

Most of all, let's bring it to the level of the heart—a heart that matters and can't be ignored when it comes to sex. A heart that is extremely important to God, your creator—*yours*.

Your heart may be confused, broken, or even hardened through your own experiences with false intimacy—a kind of intimacy that counterfeits the sex you were designed by God to enjoy. The questions, the misconceptions, the pain, just the topic itself might feel so overwhelming that it's difficult to think of facing it . . . or facing yourself.

If it is difficult, I encourage you to find a person (of your gender) who can read through this book with you. A parent, friend, youth leader, pastor, or mentor—someone who has wisdom in this area and solidly knows God's true design for

sex. One moment at a time, one choice at a time—you can begin to find healing and wholeness again.

Due to the extremely personal nature of this topic, Suzy and I have chosen to be sensitive to the identities of others in her story. The names of many of her friends and the young men in her life have been changed; so has the name of her high school. In addition, for privacy, the names of others who have graciously and authentically shared their stories were changed.

Also, in light of the personal nature of this topic, I think of you, the reader. Maybe you're just not sure what to think about sex—what's right and wrong, what's the proper context. And what God's design, purposes, and timing for its full enjoyment are all about. Even if you're feeling like you've heard all this before, I encourage you to join in, to continue the dialogue. Prayer is a great place to start. Here's one to use if you'd like:

This is a big topic, God. I bring all of my thoughts, feelings, and questions to you. I bring you all of my experiences—including the times when I've chosen something outside of your design for me in the area of sex. As I'm taking steps to really grab hold of your plan for me in my life and relationships, help me begin to see the snares that can lead me into false intimacy. Help me, Lord, to catch a glimpse of where you want to take me with all of this, of what true intimacy is about according to you. Help me long for that. Amen.

I pray for a journey of amazing discovery for you.





five

*Had I known I was valuable without doing those things,
I wouldn't have done them.*

“A BUNCH OF US ARE HANGING OUT over at Nate’s. You and Kaela want to come?”

Hearing Matt’s voice made Suzy’s heart skip a beat. Their relationship was over after someone saw her at a party making out with one of Matt’s friends, and then word got back to Matt. Totally stupid. It didn’t mean anything, but it ended things with Matt. But then they didn’t have much going for them in their relationship anyway. At least he wasn’t mad anymore or he wouldn’t be calling.

“Just a sec. Let me ask Kaela.” Suzy put her hand over her phone and checked to see what her friend wanted to do. Kaela was usually up for anything. Suzy told her what the guys were asking. Kaela, lying on Suzy’s bedroom floor and flipping through an issue of *Teen* magazine, didn’t hesitate.

Suzy uncovered the phone. “Sure.”

“OK, Josh and I will pick you guys up.”

As the four of them walked into Nate’s house, Suzy noticed some of Matt’s other friends sitting around the den. Open bottles of alcohol and half-empty glasses sat on the counter and coffee table. No other girls? Guess it didn’t matter. They were just hanging out. Nate’s mom passed through. They might

as well have been invisible. She didn't seem to care what they were doing.

"How's it going?" Josh grinned somewhat shyly at Suzy. "You want some Jose Cuervo?"

"What?"

"Tequila."

She'd try anything once . . . or twice. "Sure." She sat down on the couch near Josh as he handed her the bottle. No glass? She shrugged. Suzy tipped her head back and took in a mouthful of the clear liquid. It burned going down, but also tasted sweet and strong.

**No other girls? Guess it didn't matter.
They were just hanging out.
Nate's mom passed through.
They might as well have been invisible.**

She heard laughter and turned to see Kaela falling into the lap of one of the guys. As she watched the scene, she felt her head growing lighter. She laughed too. When she turned back, Josh was sitting closer, leaning toward her. She could smell the alcohol on his breath. She sipped more of the tequila and watched the scene around her. Everyone was getting drunk. A distant caution pricked at her thoughts, but it blurred quickly and was gone.

Josh put his arms around her and kissed her neck. It was now easy to give in and respond. She slid into his lap. As she did, she heard Matt's slurred voice in her ear: "You'll be Josh's first."

She looked up and Matt was gone, but she saw Kaela and her guy laughing and tripping down the hallway toward the bedrooms.

She heard laughter and turned to see Kaela falling into the lap of one of the guys. As she watched the scene, she felt her head growing lighter.

Then Josh was standing and pulling her up with him. The room spun as he drew her toward the hallway. She followed.

The next moments swirled by in a mixture of tequila dizziness and sex. His first but not hers—that was gone. Even in her lightheaded state, she felt sadness welling deep inside. She had lied about her self-inflicted injuries, and some believed she had been raped. The lie had taken on life and spread. So now she was marked. *Why not make it all true? Punish myself for telling it . . . like going to Matt's that day.* The thought startled her: *Am I punishing myself? Could that be part of the reason I had sex with Matt?* Her heart wrenched and she groaned.

She sat up, and her stomach pitched. Josh was leaving the room. Where was he going? As she began pulling on her jeans, she noticed through her stupor that Matt was now in front of her.

"I'm next." There appeared to be a lazy smile on his face as he pushed her back onto the bed. Her soul cried and then fell silent as Matt took his turn with her. At moments she felt the battle inside. *You deserve better. . . . No you don't—this is what you chose.*

The time passed in hazy emotional agony. She tried to shut down the internal accusations, and found herself detaching to survive. *It doesn't matter. It's only sex. It doesn't mean anything. I don't mean anything.*

**Even in her lightheaded state,
she felt sadness welling deep inside.
She had lied about her self-inflicted injuries,
and some believed she had been raped.
The lie had taken on life and spread.**

She heard muffled voices on the other side of the closed door—arguing.

Matt rolled off the bed and started to dress.

She pulled on her clothes and opened the door.

Kaela was there, grabbing Suzy's arm. "Let's go."

She was still plenty buzzed. "Why? What's—?"

"We're going right *now*." Kaela was mad. "Matt, take us home."

When the two got back to Suzy's house, she wanted to know what had gotten Kaela so hot.

"What ticked me off? You should have—" She heaved a sigh. "Oh, forget it. If you don't . . ."

"Tell me. What happened? Did someone hurt you?"

"Nothing happened to *me*. Don't you know what was going on there?" Kaela was steaming. "If you had stayed, every one of those guys would have ended up in that room with you."

Suzy drew in a quick breath and sat down on her bed. Kaela stood there with arms crossed. Suzy began to grasp what was going on behind that glare. “You stopped them, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I stopped them.”

Suzy steadied herself, her mind beginning to free itself of the tequila. Closing her eyes, she let her head drop back. She saw it now. Josh, then Matt, then—what would have been next? *Who* would have been next? She shook her head, swallowed. She deserved it. She’d made that first choice with Matt only weeks ago. Then every date or party since involved someone with those kinds of expectations—not sex, but not far from it either. That’s how they saw her now—easy. This isn’t at all what she wanted when she started going after that new image.

**“Nothing happened to *me*.
Don’t you know what was going on there?”
Kaela was steaming.**

She felt nauseated and it had nothing to do with the alcohol. She looked at Kaela still standing there, seething. Suzy looked away and flinched at the pain in her heart.

She’d have to shut that down before she crumbled.

**Free me from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.**

PSALM 31:4

NOTHING OF WORTH

A shell. An object. A toy.

That's how Suzy now saw her body. So that's how she thought guys saw her. She used her body to get attention, to be accepted. They used her body for sex.

No one thought of the person who was dying inside.

She really did begin to feel like just an object to be used by others. "I was only skin deep. Sex meant nothing to me anymore," Suzy remembered later. And changing her course didn't cross her mind. "I was so given into that lifestyle at that point—I don't know—I wasn't looking at the consequences. I wasn't able to. And that's a really dangerous place. It snowballed for me really easily."

She remembers that season of her life with deep sadness and still some shame. "I walked into a lifestyle where the more I did it, the less I cared about myself, and the more I wanted to beat myself up and give more of myself away."

"I gave myself away"—those words get used a lot. For Suzy, they have deep meaning. "God has forgiven me, but . . . sometimes I think back to the situations I put myself in. And because I have those memories, because they are a part of me, it forever changed my life, forever affected me. When I'm ninety I will still have those memories. People don't realize that; they don't realize how permanent those kinds of decisions are. You can't get that innocence back."

She knows. The forgiveness Suzy has experienced is very real—but so are the memories.

God's design for sex needs to be openly discussed. There needs to be more to the message than "sex before marriage is wrong." Read about it. Study it in the Bible. Communicate its importance. Live it out with conviction.

HONORING

Being molested twice when she was a little girl led Suzy to view herself in distorted ways. She had come to see sex only as something you do, or something that is done to you. It didn't have much meaning beyond that. But that view is so far from God's intention for sex—an expression of love within marriage, a bonding with one person, a part of enjoying getting to know one person intimately in every way. Suzy had no idea that sex was a gift for two people to enjoy, an intimacy without shame.

When sex is used in other ways, it's going to feel empty and unsatisfying. It would be some time before Suzy would fully grasp that her body and emotions were crying out for her to stop. Her hope is that others won't walk the same path she did, but if they do, that they can find a way back. "There are girls out there who have been used and have let themselves be treated that way, and now they feel like trash. They need to know there's hope, healing, forgiveness—life after the state they've been in. Newness."

Many do find that newness. Nicole, who was sexually abused from age three and then became sexually active at seventeen, is finding healing through learning her worth in God's sight. She

said, “I’m learning how to share my heart and my mind more and seeing that that is valuable.” And she is finding, in a current relationship, that her boundaries can be respected and that she is still loved.

Grasp the gift and value of sex as God intended it. Grab hold of the truth of your personal value. You’re worth much more than just being used as an object. You’re worth the beautiful, mysterious, and sacred gift of a union that God has for you and your future spouse.

And it’s not just about us. When we keep in mind God’s intention and timing for sex, we know that others are worth honoring, not violating in any way. Sex before marriage *always* dishonors the other person. Dressing to attract and to stir up emotions and hormones, touching, talking, inviting sexual thoughts or activities—all dishonor.

Stephanie learned at a young age that her femininity had power. “It became an art for me to hook guys and use them to meet my needs,” she said. “I didn’t think of them and how my behavior affected their spirit and soul.”

Another way to think of it is to consider that the other person is someone’s future spouse. Check yourself. Consider your words, actions, behavior, and thoughts toward the opposite sex. Every bit of it matters. If you’re crossing lines and not honoring that person, it’s a problem.

It’s a lot about watching ourselves to see if we’re being selfish and using someone else for our own pleasure. We could call it “exploiting,” because essentially that’s what it is.

Ryan, who was raised with the belief that he needed to get out there and have sex, has learned to see women very

differently. “When I look at a girl, instead of looking at her with lust, I remember she is a child of God, just as I am. She is worth something and special to God. I don’t see her as an object of just ‘easy fun.’”

When you begin to see yourself and others differently, the way God views us, it will impact the situations you choose to be in, how you honor yourself, and how you honor someone else. It’s a great discovery.

Capture an honoring mentality and be an example to others. How do you treat the opposite sex? How do you dress? How do you talk to them or about them? Do you honor them as Christ would?

‘LOVE AND HONOR’ NOW

“Treat others with respect.” It’s a common phrase. But the thing is, we don’t always do that. There’s something about sex. When the thought of it gets in our minds and stirs up the hormones, we can get pretty selfish. We let that desire control us instead of controlling *it*, and it quickly turns into all-about-me time.

It’s no surprise that the Bible teaches something totally different and something totally better. Romans 12:10 says, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Devotion? That’s a committed action. Two people are involved, with respect and honor flowing both ways.

No room for disrespect or abuse in either direction, only caring about the other person on a respectful, honoring level. Think of it as if that other person is your physical sister or brother.

Jesus put it this way: “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other” (John 13:34, *NLT*).

Loving others as Jesus would. That’s a huge standard, but that’s what we’re called to do. When you think of that within the context of God’s design and timing for sex, it only makes sense. Besides, wouldn’t your future spouse love it if, while you’re saving sex for marriage, you practiced honoring others as Jesus would? No question.

God, I admit it’s hard for me to naturally honor someone or love them as Jesus would. It’s especially hard when I get off track with my emotions or desires. Help me stay focused on you. Help me learn how to value others the way you do and to value myself as well. Help me grow in self-control and caring for others in ways that build them up. AMEN.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

GALATIANS 5:13

GOING DEEPER

- Are there ways you've been treated as less than a person of value by significant people in your life? How does that affect the way you allow yourself to be treated in relationships with the opposite sex?

- Reflect on your ideas about sexual intimacy. When you consider how God wants us to honor ourselves and others, in what ways can you change your thinking so that it impacts your choices from now on?

- Emotions and desires are real and natural, but at the same time some of them can lead down dangerous paths if we choose to follow them. What are ways you can keep emotions in check and honor others?

DEEPER STILL

One way you can honor yourself and others *and* keep your emotions and desires in check is to focus on activities that develop your God-given strengths and that serve others. Over the next few days, make a list of these kinds of activities. Choose one thing from your list and go after it.