

“Nicole O’Dell ‘gets’ teens, and in *Hot Buttons Sexuality Edition*, she helps quaking parents realize we can have confidence to ‘power our kids’ through the sex quagmire! She deals openly, honestly, and vividly with the culture that our kids face, but reminds us that it’s not inevitable our kids will succumb. On the contrary, Nicole shows how when we expect the best, equip them practically, and engage them honestly, our kids will thrive.”

—Sheila Wray Gregoire, author of *The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex* and *Honey, I Don’t Have a Headache Tonight*

“My motto is ‘wise women raising wiser daughters.’ The question is: how do we become wise? Nicole O’Dell is one of God’s tools. In her new book, *Hot Buttons Sexuality Edition*, Nicole not only gives us the latest on what is happening in our teens’ culture, she gives us what we need: conversation starters, examples, and the confidence to challenge our kids to live lives of purity. It’s a manual for every parent of pre-teens and teens.”

—Lynn Cowell, Proverbs 31 speaker and author of *His Revolutionary Love* and *Devotions for a Revolutionary Year*

Hot Buttons Series

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HOT BUTTONS

SEXUALITY EDITION

Nicole O'Dell

 **Kregel**
Publications

Hot Buttons Sexuality Edition

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The Hot Buttons series, as a whole, is dedicated to my mom who had to deal with more hot buttons when I was a teen than she'd care to remember. Also to my six children who have so graciously provided the research I needed to write these books . . . whether I wanted them to or not. And to my husband, Wil, who somehow managed to make my teen years look like a walk in the park.



Hot Buttons Sexuality Edition is dedicated specifically to my teenagers, Erik and Natalie, who have committed to a life of purity until marriage. I respect their strength of character, which has enabled them to walk the talk. The up-and-comers, Emily, Logan, Megan, and Ryleigh, have wonderful examples to emulate.

Love you all!

▶▶▶ *To bring a child up in the way he should go, travel that way yourself once in a while.*

—JOSH BILLINGS

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Preface

Ah, the dreaded sex topic.

What is it about this subject that makes people squirm? Christian authors write about sex with a permanent grimace in place, just knowing they're going to get nailed in reviews. And when the subject is sex, readers figuratively peer through parted fingers pressed over their eyes, not sure what they're going to find on the page. But parent-teen conversations about sex are the hardest of all.

As I worked on this book, I prayed that my motives would remain pure. I want only to share the truth and pass along the information I believe parents need to hear. If I ask you to talk to your kids about this stuff, then I'd better be willing to talk to you about it. Know what I mean?

I've prayed that the moment I took the discussion even a fraction of an inch too far, the Holy Spirit would convict me. That happened twice. I had a sentence in two different places that nagged at me when I closed my computer. I ignored that prodding for a few days, then I finally prayed and searched my heart. I realized that when I removed those lines, the content didn't suffer a bit, yet my concerns completely abated. So they had to go.

Why am I telling you this? I guess I just want you to know that when I wrote about things like oral sex or masturbation, I did it for a very important purpose and was intentional about every single use of certain words or ideas. None of it is there for shock value, or to claim some level of enlightenment above yours. Believe me, I squirm just as much as you do about the prospect of talking to my teenagers about sexual games for money.

No matter how much we squirm, though, we have to be full of godly wisdom and information on this subject. It's vital to the emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of our kids.

As I've shared in each Hot Buttons book, the game of Scenarios came about years ago when I was searching for ways to lead my children to make good decisions. I decided it would be far better to talk to them proactively about issues they would face one day than to wait until they were buried under poor choices, like I was in my own teen years.

I knew that if I had any hope of being as proactive as I wanted to be, I'd have to be willing to talk about the hard things like sex, drugs, alcohol, suicide, bullying, modesty, pornography, and more, perhaps even before my kids actually knew what those things were. No subject could be off-limits and nothing could be ignored.

That's even more true—and more difficult—with the subject of sexuality. But I committed to leaving nothing out. I much preferred that my teens make their mistakes within the safety of a dinner table discussion rather than in someone's bedroom or in the backseat of a car.

The practice of Scenarios became a favorite activity in my home and proved invaluable in preparing my teens to make good choices. The best part was the talks we'd have after the choices were made and the

consequences were presented. They felt free to explore, ask questions, experiment safely, and then when similar scenarios came up in real life, they were prepared to make the right choices.

This book series, *Hot Buttons*, was birthed as a way for you, Mom and Dad, to bring those principles and practices into your homes. You'll find each hot-button issue covered in detail with warning signs and recommendations laid out in simple form. Then you'll find the Strategic Scenarios, which will enable you to approach your teens with these topics, giving your tweens and teens the same opportunity to make safe discoveries that I gave my own kids.

And I trust you'll see the same results I have.

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Thanks to my agent, Chip MacGregor, who saw potential in a short e-book called *Pressing the Hot Buttons* that I'd written with plans to give away on my website. He turned a little e-book project into a multibook deal. The best part is that the books will find their way into many, many more families than they would have my way. Thanks for your vision, Chip.

To Cara, Cindy, Jen, Kim, Kit, and Marybeth, I love you more 'n my luggage. Thanks for the constant prayers and support.

To my Savior, Jesus Christ, thank You for Your redemptive grace that repairs our mistakes and makes it possible to reclaim purity.

PART ONE

Sexuality
HOT
BUTTONS

What exactly is a hot-button issue? A *hot button* is any emotional or controversial issue that has the potential to trigger intense reaction. What topics jump to mind that fit this description when you think of teens and tweens? Pretty much everything that pummels your kids with temptation and threatens to pull them away from a walk with God. Music, dating, computer use, texting, partying . . . The list goes on. Moms and Dads, these issues are real and often confusing. They require attention—*before* they arise. Ignoring them can have dire consequences that our children will have to live with for the rest of their lives. The decision to just wait until an actual situation arises before we face a subject is naive, at best, and possibly lethal. We have both a parental right and a godly responsibility to hit these issues hard, head-on. If we approach them preemptively, our teens will be prepared to face and handle life's toughest battles.

Prepared:

Answering Why

Sex. It's one of those words that makes the hair on the back of my neck stand up when it's said in reference to my teens. Purity is one of the scariest issues to face as a parent because many of us know firsthand how fleeting it is and how impossible it is to fully restore once it's been given away.

Teenage sexual relationships lead down a path of pain and destroyed hearts—not to mention devastated self-esteem and, eventually, mangled marriages. Little good ever comes out of two sixteen-year-olds taking on the adult responsibilities that come with a sexual relationship, and no good at all when they're thirteen- or fourteen-year-olds.

But what can you do to stop it?

Teens are going to fall in love and lose themselves in passionate moments of desire beyond their control,

aren't they?

You're powerless in the battle, so why fight it?

You should just pray hard, hold on, and hope no one gets pregnant,
right?

Wrong.

Mom and Dad, this issue is a hill we need to be willing to die on. This isn't an issue of rules and guidelines. Maintaining the purity of our teenagers shouldn't be a hope or a goal. It's not just the best-case scenario. It is a charge that we have as parents to guard our kids and protect them from the evil one who seeks to destroy their hearts and minds.

Teens need to be protected from and warned against sin and its consequences, such as the fearful potential of a second-best future marriage (or third-best, fourth-best . . .), or the emotional and physical consequences that come from impurity during the teen years. Consequences like:

- ❶ Low self-esteem
- ❷ Depression
- ❸ Feelings of inadequacy
- ❹ Jealousy
- ❺ Pregnancy
- ❻ Sexually transmitted diseases or infections (STDs or STIs)

The teen years are an extremely important preparation time! As parents, we must make these years count. You don't need to *get* through these years; you need to *power* through them. Take charge, and make a difference.

I'm not advocating for a take-no-prisoners attitude in our homes. Our children need to feel love, not condemnation. They should trust that we're an ally, not the enemy. You're not fighting *against* your kids in hopes of coming out victorious over them; you're in a battle *for* them.

For our struggle is **not against flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and **against the spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 6:12)

Dispel the myth of effective insulation.

As Christian parents, we try to insulate our families from negative outside influences. We keep watch over the things that enter our children's young minds through television, movies, and the like; we keep them from participating in mature behavior like dating and relationships before they're ready; we shield them from illegal and immoral activities like drug use and prostitution. Our protection is in no way intended to put them at a disadvantage but to safeguard them from the wiles of the enemy who whispers lies into their young, eager minds. It's not enough, however, to just say *no* (though that's a good first step).

We may wish we lived in a Christian bubble, able to insulate our children from the world, but pretending we do so ignores a huge need. It results in teens who are sent out into the world unarmed and unprepared for situations they can't avoid. Our kids will face temptation, peer pressure, and sexual desires; it's a fact. It's more important to prepare your children than it is to attempt to create a sterile, sin-free environment in a world that makes it impossible.

If you're at all like I am, you wish you could walk with your kids through the battles of life—guarding and guiding them through each pressure-filled moment, each decision between right and wrong, each temptation. You wish you could stand in for them until they are mature

enough to see and appreciate the big picture. But, while we absolutely should have high expectations and maintain a tight grip on the reins as we raise our families, we also need to prepare our kids to stand alone, to be strong in the face of temptation.

Nothing we do can fully protect our kids from the powerful combination of peer pressure plus physical desire. But you can affect how prepared they are to defend themselves against the onslaught. In each and every pressure-filled moment of decision, there comes a point—just before the final decision is made—when all the preparation, forethought, and wisdom we’ve been equipping our kids with comes to a head. Once the hot button is pushed, the opportunity for laying groundwork is over. They know what they know, and in the heat of the moment, there’s no time for anything else. They make a choice based on all the work that came before. And our teens need to be equipped to make the right choice; armed with something more than *no*; braced by facts, your wisdom, and God’s Word.

Teens will likely face persecution, disappointment, and even out-and-out rejection and heartbreak when they choose to stand for what’s right, especially when it comes to their sexual purity. If we’re proactive, our children can reach their teen years empowered to make hard choices in the face of those afflictions—willing to withstand and endure them for the sake of Christ and for their own well-being.

Take the mystery of out sin!

How can we expect our teens to commit to something, and then stick to it, unless they really understand what it is they’re agreeing to?

In Mark 14:38, we're warned to watch and pray about temptation. Even for Christian adults, our spirits might be willing to avoid temptation, but we are cautioned to be attentive because our bodies are weak. How much more so for someone who isn't prepared for the temptation! We may have raised the most well-intentioned kids on the planet—ones whose spirits are willing—but their flesh is weak. They need to be trained.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **Teach them to your children,** talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deut. 11:18–19)

Before your kids even approach dating age, you need to guide them in the knowledge and application of God's Word and the pursuit of His will. Ephesians 6:13 says, "Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (In chapter 10, we're going to do just that as it pertains to your teens and sexuality.)

As we move forward in fully equipping them, we need to teach them three things:

- Why it matters
- What tools they will need
- That they aren't alone

Why does it matter? What's in it for them as they stand on God's Word in the face of peer pressure, risking friendships, popularity, and relationships? Our teens need to believe that the Lord has a plan for them and His ways are best. They need to care about arriving at the altar with their hearts intact. They need to see the value in preserving their sexuality and their purity. Only a time-invested parent, who prays as much as she talks and listens as much as she prays, will raise a child eager and willing to say NO and mean it.

What tools do they need? Our teens and preteens need options: a robust life filled with wholesome choices like church events and sports—rather than too much time home alone riddled with boredom and mischief. They need to be a part of a family that is serving the Lord, and they need to see parents who practice what they preach. They need to continuously grow in the knowledge of the Word and in relationship with God.

Where will we be during the process? Mom, Dad, Guardian—you need to make a commitment too. Your teen needs to know that you'll be aware of what's going on, and that you'll do whatever is needed to help them honor God, obey you, and respect themselves, including opening the door to outside resources when necessary. This all requires time, communication, and godly insight into the minds of your teens.

We can be confident parents, even in these scary times!

When we recognize that our kids face strong sexual temptation they are ill-equipped to handle, it's very difficult not to panic. We realize that our teens' decisions related to their sexuality will affect the rest of their lives.

We're torn between the extremes of denial—just letting go and hoping that everything will work itself out in the end—and tyranny—locking them up for a few years and checking in at, oh, around twenty-two. We doubt we're up to the job.

We do have a promise to cling to, though.

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:6)

Let's break that down.

Being confident of this:

You can be sure that this is the way it is. It's a promise.

He who began:

Who began it? "He" did. Not you. Not your teen. *God* started . . .

A good work:

The work He started is a good and righteous thing.

Will carry it on to completion:

It will be finished. He didn't start something only to see it fall to pieces because of some teenage mistakes. It *will* be completed. It's a promise of God, and I choose to believe Him.

Until the day of Christ Jesus:

Here's the thing, though. Every one of us, including our teens, is a work in progress. This work, which will be completed, has a long way to go . . . until the day of Christ Jesus, to be exact.

The battle we fight in protecting, shielding, and preparing our teens for life's hot-button issues isn't as black-and-white as a physical battle in which the wins and losses can be easily quantified. Sexuality and the choices involved are often internal matters of the heart that we may struggle to identify. We must often blindly face the battles for our kids, operating more on faith than on sight, being obedient to the call of Christ and reliant on the leading of the Holy Spirit. We have been given tools in God's Word to prepare us to guard against the confusion of this world, however. And we're granted partnership with the Holy Spirit, who will lead and guide us according to godly wisdom and sight. That guidance is invaluable as we prepare our kids for the battle over their sexual choices.

CHECK POINTS >>>

CHECK POINTS

- ✓ Teenage sexual relationships lead down a path of pain and destroyed hearts—not to mention devastated self-esteem and, eventually, mangled marriages.
- ✓ The battle we fight is not *against* our teens, it's *for* them!
- ✓ Maintaining the purity of our teenagers shouldn't be a hope or a goal. It's not just the best-case scenario. It is a charge that we have as parents to guard our kids and protect them from the evil one who seeks to destroy their hearts and minds.
- ✓ Our kids will face temptation, peer pressure, and sexual desires; it's a fact. It's more important to prepare your children than it is to attempt to create a sterile, sin-free environment in a world that makes it impossible.
- ✓ Nothing we do can fully protect our kids from the powerful combination of peer pressure plus physical desire. But you can affect how prepared they are to defend themselves against the onslaught.
- ✓ If we're proactive, our children can reach their teen years empowered to make hard choices in the face of afflictions—willing to withstand and endure for the sake of Christ and for their own well-being.
- ✓ We're granted partnership with the Holy Spirit, who will lead and guide us according to godly wisdom and sight. That guidance is invaluable as we prepare our kids for the battle over their sexual choices.