

## Hints and Helps

**S**in. *What a negative subject!* Our modern world uses euphemisms for sin. However, the Bible calls sin, sin. Man continually changes his standards concerning sin, but God's standards remain the same.

The Bible pictures sin as primarily the violation of God's law. The main word for sin in the New Testament denotes missing the mark. Romans 3:23 refers to this as falling short of the mark. The Bible also pictures sin as a state of alienation between man and his holy God. The one sin comes from habit; the other sin comes from character. One sin is found in man's actions and the other in man's very nature. In simple terms, man is sinful, so he sins.

Anyone who has children or is around them for long understands human depravity. Do you have to teach children to resist you or to disobey? From the inside out, children and adults innately know how to sin.

However, part of a small child is unusually pliable and sensitive. The best time to teach children the right way from the wrong way, God's way versus man's way of doing things, is when they are young. You will be surprised at how much young children know about sin. They are keen at picking up on adults' inconsistencies.

The sins of a little child are simple but extremely vivid to him. Who stole the cookies? Who lied to Mom or Dad? Who used bad language? Who lost his temper? Whether it seems small or large, missing the mark is still an affront to a holy God.

### Verse to Memorize

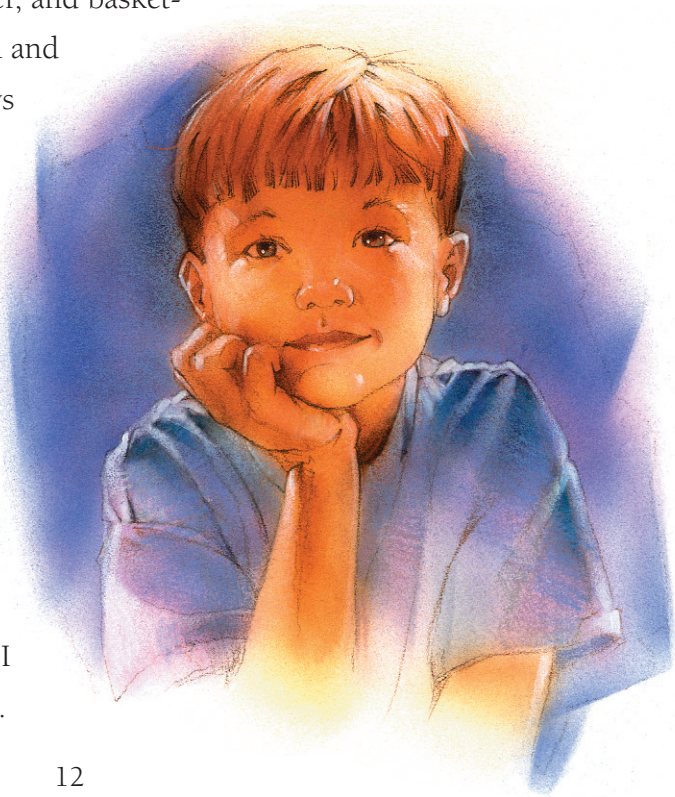
*Romans 3:23:* “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

# Was Jesus Bad?



**H**i! *My name is Toph*er. Really my name is Christopher, but my friends call me Toph or Topher. I'm eight. I like to ride my bike and play T-ball, soccer, and basketball. I have two sisters, Megan and Bobbie. Megan is ten and plays the piano all the time. She takes lessons. Roberta is four. We call her Bobbie. She's fun to tease, but she drives me nuts, always asking, "What's that?" or "What does this mean?" Mom and Dad say she'll grow out of always asking questions, but I doubt it.

Mom sometimes tells me, "Topher, you are a good boy." I know I'm not really that good.



While I'm with her and Dad, I usually behave like I'm 'sposed to, but when they're away, sometimes I behave very badly—like one day when Mom thought Tommy and I were collecting newspapers to recycle.

We live kind of close to a horse farm. Out back of the pasture is a creek. Tommy and I like to go swimming there on hot days. Mom usually lets us, but that day she was planning to take Megan to Eastman, and she told me to be home by one o'clock. When Tommy and I got ready to leave in the morning, it was hot already. We were taking my wagon for collecting.

Mom gave me my watch when we left. "Now don't forget to be back in time, and no dipping in the creek this morning."

"Okay, Mom." We went to all the other houses on my side of the street, but nobody was home.

"I'm tired of walking, and we aren't getting anything. Let's go to the creek," Tommy said.

I wasn't too sure. "I don't think we better. We have to go to the houses on the other side of the street, and Mom said to be back by one o'clock."

"We don't need to finish the collecting. Let's tell your mom no one was home and just go swimming."

"But that's lying, Tommy!" I really didn't like that idea.

"Your mom doesn't have to know that. Besides, she only cares that you're home on time. We can get back by one o'clock."

"Let's try one more house first."

No one was home at that house either, and Tommy started bugging me again. He teased me and said, "You're too chicken to go swimming, Topher." All boys hate to be called chicken, especially me.



I looked around. “Well, it’s sort of true. We tried five houses, and no one was home. All right,” I finally said; “but I have to be home by one.”

We ran as fast as we could. It wasn’t too easy since I was pulling my wagon. When we got to the creek, we were super hot. Our hair and shirts were all sweaty. We took off our socks and shoes and rolled up our pant legs. The creek water felt great. We splashed each other and played Marco Polo. I closed my eyes, and I had to try to find Tommy by listening to his voice. I didn’t know it, but Tommy had climbed out of the creek. When I called “Marco,” he was going to say “Polo,” but I would never tag him, because I was in the water and he was out of the water!

“Marco,” I yelled.

“Po-AH!” Tommy screamed.

I opened my eyes. Tommy was lying on some rocks by the shore. I shouted, “Tommy! Are you all right?”

He was crying. I had never seen Tommy cry before. “I think I broke my arm; it hurts—but not too bad unless I touch it.” I guess Tommy had fallen on the slippery rocks.

I splashed through the water and over to Tommy. “Let me see,” I said. I didn’t mean to, but I kind of twisted his arm so I could see it better.

“OW!” Tommy yelled at me.

I put my socks and shoes back on, and I had to put Tommy’s on him too. Then he got into the wagon, and I pulled him to my house. It was closer than his.

“Mom, Tommy needs help! He fell.”

Mom came out to the porch. “Is it your arm, son?”

“Yes, ma’am.” Tommy kind of moaned. Then Mom must have seen Tommy’s wet pants and feet. She looked at mine too.

“How did you boys get your pants, socks, and shoes all wet?”

I couldn’t look at her. “Uhh, walking in the culvert. The water was deep.”

“Were you down at the creek?”

“Uhh, no, Mom. We were collecting newspapers.”

“Topher, I see weeds caught in your shoes. Those weeds grow only down at the creek. Are you lying to me?”

“No, Mom.” I shook my head and tried to look at her. I couldn’t do it. “Well, I mean, yes.” Then I saw my watch. “We’re home on time.” I told her. I thought that might make everything okay.

Mom just shook her head. She looked sad. “Let’s get Tommy home first, and then you and I will settle this.”

“But, Mom, we were early.”

“And dishonest and lying and disobedient.”

Mom grounded me for the rest of the weekend. I couldn't even go with her, Megan, and Bobbie to Eastman. Megan and Bobbie got to buy something at the dollar store in the mall, and they got drinks at Burger World. That hurt. I felt bad because I had let Mom down. She had trusted me, and I blew it.

When they got home, I told Mom, “I'm sorry I disobeyed you this morning, and I'm sorry I lied to you.” Then I asked her if Jesus ever lied to His parents.

“No, He didn't.”

“How do you know?”

“The Bible says He was perfect.”

“How could a boy be perfect? I didn't want to disobey you. I just wanted to cool off in the creek. Didn't Jesus ever feel like that?”

“No. The Bible is clear that Jesus is God, and when He lived on earth, He never did anything to disobey or break God's law.”<sup>1</sup>

“He must have been different from me 'cause I can't help it sometimes.”

“Jesus was different from all boys and girls. He was God in flesh, or skin. God is perfect, and so was Jesus—even as a boy.”

“I wish I were perfect and did the right thing all the time. Then I wouldn't ever get grounded.”

I think Mom liked that idea, too, because she smiled. “Then I'd never have to ground you.” She hugged me, and I knew she'd forgiven me too.

### Verses to Read

*John 18:38:* “[Pilate] went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”

*1 Peter 1:19:* “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

1. Hebrews 4:15

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD



- 1. When Jesus was your age, how was He different from you?*
- 2. Did Jesus ever lie to His parents?*
- 3. Name one way you have a hard time obeying.*