



HOT DOG HUNT

“You played great in practice, Justin,” said Jeremy. “I’m hungry. Let’s get a hot dog while we wait for our rides.”

“Sounds great,” Justin said. The boys walked to the snack stand by the soccer field.

Justin was about to take a bite of his hot dog when his mom called from the parking lot. “Justin! Please hurry or I’ll be late for my meeting.”

“Coming.” Justin ran to grab his soccer bag. He tossed his water bottle inside, then glanced at the uneaten hot dog and tossed it in too. “Guess I’ll have to eat it later.” He zipped up the bag and ran toward the car.

“Sorry to be in such a rush,” Mom said. “I couldn’t find my keys, and now I’m late.” They drove down the street to the church. “My meeting shouldn’t take long. You and Ellie can play in the Sunday school room.”

When they got home after the meeting, Justin tossed his soccer bag under his bed and raced to the kitchen. “I’m starving!” he exclaimed. “Yum, roast beef for dinner.”

While they ate, Justin told his parents about soccer practice.

“When’s your next game?” asked Dad.

“Not for a while. It’s on Saturday.”

The week flew by. On Friday, Justin was eager to play with his dog, Cookie. But on his way out the door, Mom stopped

him. “Justin, you’ve got to clean your room. Something smells bad in there.”

“Do I have to right now? I was going to play fetch with Cookie.”

“At least collect your dirty laundry and bring it down. It’s probably your soccer socks that stink.”

Justin sprinted back to his room. As he gathered his dirty clothes, he noticed a strange odor. “Eww!” He scrunched his nose. Mom was right—something did smell terrible. He raced to the laundry room and tossed his clothes into the basket, then headed outdoors.

At bedtime, the odor in his room was worse.

“Ooh-wee!” said Dad. “It smells like something has perished in here.”

“What does perished mean?” asked Justin.

“It means there must be something rotten or spoiled in your room.”

“I don’t know what it is. I took out the dirty laundry.”

“Maybe you’d better go on a hunt tomorrow.”

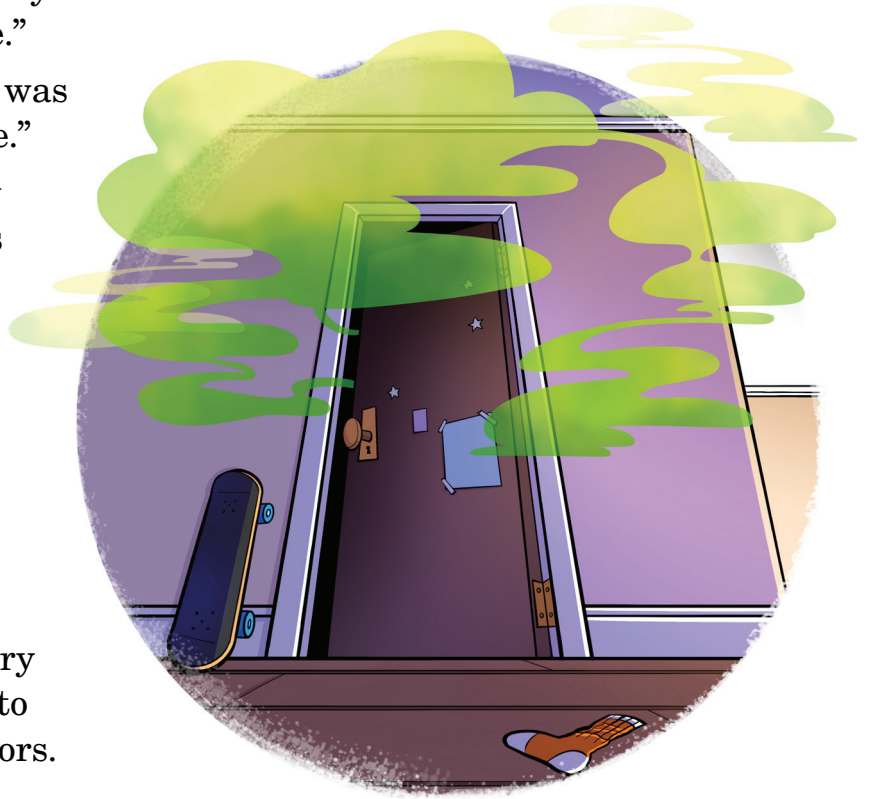
The next morning, Justin opened the window for some fresh air.

Ellie knocked on Justin’s door, and he let her in. She immediately pinched her nose. “It tinks in here.”

“Yep. I have to hunt for whatever’s making it stink.”

“Can I hep? I wanna hunt for da tinky ting.”

“Okay, look in there.” Justin pointed to the closet. Ellie started crawling around, sniffing like a dog.



“Hey, that’s a great idea, Ellie.” Justin ran to the backyard and led his dog up to his bedroom. “Come on, Cookie. Find what’s stinkin’ up my room.”

Cookie sniffed around the room. He went into the closet, then came back out.

“It’s not in there,” said Justin.

The dog sniffed under the dresser, then turned the other way.

“Nope, not dere,” said Ellie.

Cookie ran from toy to toy, sniffing. Then he stopped, frozen in place. *Sniff, sniff.* The dog’s nose wiggled. *Sniff, sniff.* Then Cookie dove under the bed. *Woof!*

Justin peered under the bed. Cookie pawed at the soccer bag. Justin pulled it out and unzipped it.

He gagged as he reached in and pulled out a moldy hot dog. “Gross.”

“Dats icky.” Ellie pinched her nose again. “Mommy! Daddy! Come see.” Ellie ran down the hall.



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Mom and Dad came quickly to Justin's room.

"What did you find?" asked Mom.

Justin held up the hot dog.

"That's really disgusting," said Dad. "Where was it?"

"My soccer bag under the bed."

"It's had plenty of time to spoil." Mom waved a hand in front of her nose.

Dad looked at Cookie. "Looks like you had some help with your hunt."

"Yep." Justin patted his dog's head. "Cookie won the hunt for the smelly hot dog."

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1. Have you ever seen or smelled spoiled food?
2. What word did Justin's dad use that means rotten or spoiled? *Perished.*
3. Food here on earth will spoil or "perish" like Justin's hot dog, but Jesus offers something that will last forever. What is it? *(See John 6:47-48.)
Eternal life (bread of life) to those who believe in him.*