

**BACK TO SCHOOL**

→ with God ←

**2024**



**Spot the  
difference!**

[suni.org.uk/backtoschoolwithgod](https://suni.org.uk/backtoschoolwithgod)

# Back to School

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## Welcome & introduction

15 mins

### Welcome **PPT Slide 1**

A warm welcome to our *Back to School with God* Sunday service. This week marks the start of a new school year. It is a time of change! Not just for our children and young people, but for adults and for our community.

The theme today is **Spot the Difference**. It is easy to spot the difference that going back to school makes. This is a photo of **before the service, obtain a photo of one of the children in your church** this summer. (Name) is in the sunshine, wearing shorts and a t-shirt. In the weeks to come, he/she won't look like this at all – they will look like this! **Show a second image of the same child wearing school uniform.**

(If you are unable to source a local photograph you can use **PPT Slide 2** and adjust the wording appropriately.)

- Hands up if you got something new for the return to school! What was it?

It is good to get new things. It is good to change our clothes. Later in our service we will be exploring the Bible and hear how Jesus changed people's lives.

It is good to remember that at a time of change, we can rely on God, who is unchanging, always faithful and true. Hebrews 13:8 in the Bible helps us remember that. **PPT Slide 3**

### **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Hebrews 13:8**

Because Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, he is with us now as we come to worship him. Isn't that amazing?! Let's pray.

### **Opening prayer (own words or prayer suggested below)**

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word, the Bible. Thank you for these words we have read this morning, which bring us comfort, hope and reassurance. Thank you, Jesus, that you never change. Thank you that you love us.

Thank you that the deep care you had for people when you were here on earth is still available to us today. Thank you that just as you changed lives then, you are still changing lives today. Thank you for your death on the cross and your resurrection from the dead. Thank you that those who come to you and ask can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Lord Jesus, we confess our wrongdoings. Thank you for your grace and mercy.

Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers, transforming us so we can live differently than we did before. Thank you that we can spot the difference you make in our lives.

Hallelujah, Lord, we worship you! Amen.

### **Praise Item** *(own choice, or one of the following)*

- [Bless the Lord, O my soul](#) (10,000 Reasons) Matt Redman ©2011 Shout! Publishing
- [How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds](#) (traditional)
- [Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all Nature](#) (traditional)
- [Here I am to Worship](#) Tim Hughes ©2001 Kingsway's Thankyou Music
- [Oh, the Mercy of God](#) Geoff Bullock ©1997 Watershed Productions/Thankyou Music
- [Our God](#) (Water you turned into wine) Chris Tomlin/Jonas Myrin/Jesse Reeves/Matt Redman ©2010 Thankyou Music
- [Waymaker](#) Michael W. Smith ©2016 Integrity Music Europe

### **All-age Activity**

- I wonder, are you good at noticing things? Are you good at spotting the difference?

***You could give an example of how observant/unobservant you are before moving on to play a Spot the Difference game. Choose from the following:***

#### **Spot the Difference Active Game**

Source three or four different brightly coloured pieces of A4 card. In advance, place a plate on each, draw round and cut out to give you four different coloured spots. Invite four volunteers to come forward and stand holding a coloured spot at four different places around the church. Play music and invite the children to move round, as in musical bumps. Explain that when the music stops, they should run to one of the people holding the spots. You will shout a colour and an instruction – everyone at the spot should do what you say. They should try not to copy the other children but do something different.

- Make a funny face.
- Do an action with your hands.
- Pretend to be an animal.
- Strike a superhero pose.
- Do a dance.
- Pretend to play an instrument.

#### **Spot the Difference PPT**

Ask the congregation to work in pairs to spot five differences between the two school classrooms on **PPT Slide 4**. The differences are revealed on **PPT Slide 5** - 1) Bunting 2) Missing E on the blackboard 3) colour of the teacher's skirt 4) Flowers on the plant 5) Missing rucksack beside the desk.

## **Kim's Game**

Invite children to gather around a tray of small items and look at it carefully. Cover the tray, remove or add an item, then show the tray once more. Which item has been removed or added? Can you spot the difference?

### **What is different?**

Invite the congregation to spot the difference on the speaker, who turns their back or hides and changes one small thing about their appearance. When they come back to face the congregation, the congregation then guess what is different about the speaker. Suggestions: add/remove glasses, a large earring, a scarf, headband; change shoes or tie.

Or involve some teenagers! Invite them to stand in front of the children for a minute while the children look at them. Ask them to step behind a screen/behind a blanket to change an item and then reappear. Can you spot the difference?

Sometimes we can easily spot the difference when things are moved or changed. For example, we can spot the difference in other people when they get new glasses or grow and suddenly become taller than us! These are all outward changes. However sometimes people change on the inside too. We are going to think about that today in our Bible story.

We are going to hear two stories from the Bible this morning. Both take place around the city of Jericho, where Jesus was visiting one day. There was a huge crowd there, as word had spread far and wide of the amazing things Jesus had been doing. People wanted to see him.

- Have you ever been in a big crowd? Where was it? What did it feel like? What did it sound like?

In the book of Luke in the Bible we hear about two people who were in that crowd in Jericho that day. See if you can spot any differences between how they responded to Jesus, how they felt and what they did.

**Choose one of the following options to relate and explore the Bible stories of the blind beggar and Zacchaeus in Luke 18:35-19:10.**

### Read the Bible then chat about it

Ask an adult who works in a school, or a teenager, to read **Luke 18:35-19:10**. If you have technology, display the Bible passage and corresponding images on **PPT Slides 6-10**, moving them on appropriately as the Bible is read. (The Bible version used on the PowerPoint is NIV. Photo credits from LumoProject.com courtesy of freebibleimages.com.)

Following this, invite people to turn to their neighbour and chat for 5 minutes. Display **PPT Slide 11** which has questions for them to discuss. If you have no technology, then ask one question at a time. Or alternatively, print out the questions beforehand and insert them in a hymnbook. Encourage people to look up Luke 18:35-19:10 in their Bibles so they can refer to it.

- Can you spot any differences between the blind beggar and Zacchaeus? Think about before, during and after they met Jesus.
- I wonder, if you were the blind beggar or Zacchaeus, how would you have felt when Jesus spoke to you?
- I wonder, if you had been in the crowd that day, what would you have gone home and told people?

### Spontaneous Drama

Download **BSG24 Spontaneous Drama**. Unpack the Bible story dramatically using children or adult volunteers playing Jesus, the blind beggar and Zacchaeus. Show **PPT Slides 12-14** at the appropriate points marked on the drama script.

### Storytelling Script

Download **BSG24 Storytelling Script**. Tell the Bible stories of the blind beggar and Zacchaeus from Luke 18:35-19:10 using two volunteers as visual aids.

## Children's Praise Song *(own choice, or one of the following)*

- [I have decided to follow Jesus](#) (traditional, Simon Marak)
- [I'm following the King](#) ©2003 Paul Sheely, Emu Music
- [Jesus, Strong and Kind](#) ©2019 CityAlight Music
- [This little light of mine](#) ©2016 Listener Kids
- [Open the eyes of my heart, Lord](#) Paul Baloche – Shout Praises Kids
- [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) (A New Creation) The Rizers ©2011 Super Big Robot
- [Shine from the Inside Out](#) ©2008 Elevation Kids
- [Zacchaeus was a wee little man](#) (traditional)

## Applying the Bible

15-20 mins

If you used **BSG24 Spontaneous Drama** or **BSG24 Storytelling Script**, invite the beggar and Zacchaeus to take up their positions by standing side by side at the front. If you chose **Read the Bible passage then chat about it**, at this point display **PPT Slide 14** which shows the blind beggar and Zacchaeus side by side. Alternatively, print **BSG24 Bible Characters** onto A3 card and invite a volunteer to come forward and hold up the image.

- I wonder, what differences did you spot between the two characters?

**Encourage whatever suggestions are put forward, such as rich/poor, tall/short etc. before going on to highlight some key differences scripted below.**

Well done on spotting all these differences! There are lots, but today we are going to think of two in particular.

### PPT Slide 15

The first difference is **their attitude to Jesus** at the start.

**Click to remove the first Spot the Difference magnifying glass on PPT Slide 15**

- The blind beggar was desperate for Jesus' help. The blind beggar knew Jesus was someone who had power from God to help him. He cried out to Jesus, asking to be healed (**point to the blind beggar**).
- On the other hand, Zacchaeus (**point to Zacchaeus**) was just curious about Jesus. He was hoping to see what Jesus was like. Zacchaeus was taking his first steps to discover and explore for himself who Jesus was.

I wonder, do you see yourself in the blind beggar or in Zacchaeus? Are you desperate for Jesus' help, like the blind beggar? Then pray to Jesus, asking him specifically for what you need! Or are you curious about Jesus, like Zacchaeus? Are you starting to wonder who he is? Then... **highlight local opportunities for exploring faith such as SU Group in school, youth group, Bible study group, coming to church etc.**

The second difference is **their response to Jesus** after meeting him.

**Click to remove the second Spot the Difference magnifying glass on PPT Slide 15**

When Jesus meets with us and we start following him, there is an inner change within us – our sins are forgiven! We have a new start. Jesus can make a greedy person generous, an impatient person patient, a fearful person bold, a sad person full of joy! People should be able to see this inner change in our outward actions, if we follow Jesus and are his friends.

Both men responded to Jesus and his love for them in different ways.

- The blind beggar (**point to the blind beggar**) responded by praising God and telling others about Jesus and all he had done for him.

- Zacchaeus (**point to Zacchaeus**) responded by changing his behaviour, by righting his wrongs, by showing God's love to other people in a practical way.

How do we respond to Jesus and his love for us? Do others hear us speaking openly about following him and the difference he makes in our lives, just like the blind beggar? Do others see God's love in our actions, just like Zacchaeus? There are so many ways we can respond to Jesus!

But this one thing is certain. Jesus makes a big difference in his followers that others should be able to spot!

### **PPT Slide 16**

Both men lived in Jericho. I wonder how the huge change in these two men's lives impacted the city of Jericho – their community? Imagine what conversations people had with the blind beggar, who was now a follower of Jesus. Imagine what it felt like to be on the receiving end of Zacchaeus' kindness and generosity!

The transformation must have been obvious to people round about. Did this cause people to pause and consider Jesus' love for *them*? Did it make them think, 'Maybe Jesus could change me too?'

Jericho was their community. What about our schools, our workplace, our community? Imagine the impact on our classroom or staffroom or at the school gate as Jesus' love and power is displayed and shown through all of us!

### **Testimony (*choose one of the following*)**

#### **A local volunteer or prayer supporter**

Invite a young person, teacher, parent/grandparent, SU Group leader, school volunteer, Bible Alive/Open the Book volunteer to share how and why they serve/pray for a school.

#### **Video Testimony**

Show **BSG24 Video Testimony** where 15-year-old Susanna speaks of the difference Jesus makes to her and how she seeks to make a difference for Jesus in her school.

#### **Story sharing**

Visit the [Serve your Local School](#) website where you will find stories to share with your congregation of the way some Christians and churches engage with schools, or invite your Youth Worker, Local Trust Schools Worker or SU Regional Worker to share some stories of what God is doing through churches and Christians in your area. See **BSG24 An Overview of Resources** for contact details.



**Praise Item**      *(choose your own or one of the following suggestions)*

- [Amazing Grace](#) (traditional)
- [Amazing Grace \(My Chains are Gone\)](#) Chris Tomlin, ©2006  
worshiptogether.com
- [And can it be](#) (traditional)
- [Goodness of God](#) Bethel Music ©2018 SHOUT! Music Publishing
- [Graves into Gardens](#) ©2019 Elevation Worship Music
- [He calls me Friend](#) ©2023 City Alight
- [I've Found a Friend, O such a Friend!](#) (traditional)
- [Jesus, what a beautiful name](#) ©1995 Hillsong Music Publishing
- [King of Kings](#), Hillsongs Worship

*Choose a prayer response that best suits your congregation. Reflective, active, congregational and personal prayer options are provided.*

### Magnifying Glass Prayers

- Hand out a magnifying glass outline - [BSG24 Magnifying Glass Printable](#) – to children and young people.
- Ask the whole congregation to look at the images on [BSG24 Response PPT](#) and as they watch, think about how those who love Jesus might make a difference in these places. (If you have no technology, mention different places in schools, pausing after each one so people can think: the school bus; the classroom; the staffroom; the sports field; the canteen; the school gate; the playground).
- After watching the PPT, invite children to write or draw on the magnifying glass a way they can make a difference for Jesus in one of the places they saw: e.g. ask someone to sit with you and your friends at lunchtime, don't argue back with the referee!
- As the children are doing this, lead in prayer – pray for the children and what they are writing, that they will follow through with making a difference; pray for staff and volunteers from your congregation who work in or serve local schools.

As an alternative, you might give everyone in church a magnifying glass outline and invite them to write a prayer for schools on it. Everyone could stick their response somewhere in church as a reminder to keep praying, or else take them home as a reminder to continue to pray and ask Jesus to use them and help them live differently.

### SPOT Prayers

In advance, download [BSG24 SPOT Prayers](#). Print two copies, double-sided landscape (flip on the short edge). Cut out the coloured circles so that you have four marked S, P, O and T with related prayers on the reverse and eight coloured circles with no letters. Identify four individuals who can lead in prayer. Give them the S, P, O, T prayers prior to the service. Hide the circles with no letters under chairs or pews for children to find.

- Invite children to find the hidden coloured circles and bring them to the front.
- Invite the four adults holding S, P, O and T to come to the front and make a group with the children who have matching coloured circles.
- Point out that the letters S, P, O and T make the word spot – such as in Spot the Difference! Invite everyone to stand in that order.
- Explain that these four letters are going to help us pray for schools and that (names) are going to now lead us in prayer.

#### Volunteer 1:

**S** stands for **Speak**: Lord Jesus, we pray that Christian adults and pupils in schools will not be shy about telling others of you. We pray that they will speak words of kindness and say things that will encourage and help others. Amen.

### **Volunteer 2:**

**P** stands for **Pray**: Lord Jesus, we pray for our children and young people, teachers and school staff. May they remember that you go with them as they go back to school. Please strengthen and help them. Remind us as a church family to support them and uphold them in prayer. Amen.

### **Volunteer 3:**

**O** stands for **Others**: Lord Jesus, others spotted the difference in the blind beggar and Zacchaeus after they met you. We have met with you today! Make us a joyful and generous people. May others spot the difference you make in us and come to know your love for them. Amen.

### **Volunteer 4:**

**T** stands for **Thanks**: Lord Jesus, thank you for meeting the blind beggar and Zacchaeus in Jericho. Thank you for changing their lives for ever. Thank you for our schools and our community. Thank you for your Spirit's power to change lives here, bringing hope for the future. Amen.

**All: Amen.**

## **Responsive Prayers for Schools**

*Prior to the service invite four different people to lead in prayer. We suggest a primary pupil, secondary/post-primary pupil, a student, and a church representative. Email [BSG24 Responsive Prayers for Schools](#) to those taking part prior to the service or print and hand them copies they can read from. There is a response from the congregation after each person prays: **PPT Slide 17**.*

**Leader:** It is important that we pray for our children, young people and school staff as they start a new school year. We want them to feel the support of the church family and that they are going **back to school with God!** I have invited several people to lead us in prayer. If that is you, please come forward. After each person prays, we will repeat the words on the PPT slide. Let's practice that together now: **May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes!**

### **Primary pupil**

Lord Jesus, thank you that you are our Saviour and our Best Friend. Thank you that you will be by our side when we go to nursery and school. Today we heard about the blind man and how he praised you, Lord, for what you did in his life. Help us to be thankful, like he was. Help us not to moan. Please help us to tell others about how great you are and what you have done for us. We heard about Zacchaeus and the way you changed him too. Please change us into people who are kind, generous and loving. May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes. **May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes!**

### **Secondary/post-primary pupil**

Lord Jesus, today we heard about how you met with two different people in Jericho. Thank you that you are with us here and in our schools. Thank you for the church family who are supporting us in prayer. As Christian young people, help us to live out our faith in school so that our friends and classmates can spot the difference Jesus makes. Help us to encourage others. Please strengthen those who are prefects and pupil leaders. Help them to set a good example to younger pupils. May those who know you reflect the love of

Jesus in their inner attitudes and outward behaviour. May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes. **May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes!**

### **Student**

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of faith. Thank you that you meet with us, just as we are. Help those of us who are struggling, like the blind beggar. Please strengthen and help us. Give us courage to ask you honestly for what we need. Help those of us who feel we don't need you, or feel that we are not good enough to come to you. May we hear you calling our name, just like Zacchaeus did. May we come to experience the depth of your love for us, and may others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes. **May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes!**

### **Church Representative**

Lord Jesus, meeting you has transformed our lives. Forgive us that sometimes we keep your love to ourselves and are indifferent to the needs of others. Help us to show Jesus to those we meet in our schools, our neighbourhoods, our communities. Give us discernment to see individuals who are hurting and in need, like the blind beggar. Make us sensitive to those who look fine on the outside, like Zacchaeus, who might desire to know your love, forgiveness and transforming power.

Lord Jesus, you have challenged us today to reflect your love to others, so that they may spot your presence in our lives. We pray for our children, young people and school staff as they go to nurseries, schools, colleges and universities. Please guard and keep them. Help them to live, speak and act differently. Give them courage to believe in you when others don't. Inspire them to demonstrate your love in practical ways so that many others may spot the difference knowing Jesus makes. **May others spot the difference knowing Jesus makes!**

### **Prayer Stations**

Each station requires props as visual aids and aims to explore a Bible verse. Print [BSG24 Prayer Stations](#) as instructions. The stations can be visited in any order.

#### **Station 1: Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" Luke 18:41**

*Suggested visual aid: build a Lego school with some figures inside it (check Google images for ideas of Lego classrooms or schools) or make a 'school' out of a shoebox.*

- How would you answer Jesus? What do you want Jesus to do in your school? Ask Jesus!
- Write or draw your prayer requests and place them inside the 'school'.

#### **Station 2: Immediately the blind beggar received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. Luke 18:43**

*Suggested visual aid: a bell.*

- Think about your school(s). What can you praise God for? What is good? How has God helped or answered prayer?
- Say a thank-you prayer out loud! Begin, "Thank you God for..."
- Ring the bell as a sign of celebration!

**Station 3: Jesus looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” Luke 19:5**

*Suggested visual aid: illuminated twig tree. If you cannot source this, cut some branches or collect twigs and arrange in a vase; you will also need tie-on labels.*

- Think of a nursery, school, college, or other place in your community where you would like Jesus to be made welcome.
- Pray for that place. Pray for God’s presence. Pray that it will be welcoming to the people and work of God.
- Write the name of that place on a label and tie it to a branch of the tree.

**Station 4: Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed Jesus gladly. He stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Luke 19:8**

*You will need printed scenarios from [BSG24 Prayer Stations](#), pens.*

- Pick up a scenario. Think to yourself or discuss with others: How might Jesus spot the difference in a follower of Jesus? What might they say? How might they act?
- Write your answer on the reverse and place under a tealight.
- Pray that others might see the difference Jesus makes in you!

**Praise Item** (*own choice, or one of the following*)

- [I’m ready to go](#) (from the album ‘Songs that Jesus said’ by Keith & Kristyn Getty; Copyright © 2005, Getty Music Publishing) – NB this is not a lyrics video.
- [In Christ Alone](#) Keith Getty, Stuart Townend ©2002 Thankyou Music
- [I stand Amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene](#) (traditional)
- [Take my life and let it be](#) (traditional, Frances Ridley Havergal)
- [Tell out my soul](#) Timothy Dudley-Smith ©1962 Hope Publishing Co.
- [I’ll go in the strength of the Lord](#) (traditional, Edward Turney)
- [What a friend we have in Jesus](#) (traditional, Joseph Medlicott Scriven)
- [What gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer](#) (Yet not I) ©2018 CityAlight Music
- [Who paints the skies](#) (only the Splendour) Stuart Townend ©1995 Thankyou Music

**Closing prayer or Benediction**

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