

### Putting on the Shirt

*For this talk you will need a white football shirt (eg an England 'home' shirt) and you will ask a volunteer to stand at the front wearing the shirt.*

**Has anyone ever had the dream of becoming a professional footballer?** Imagine what it would feel like to put on the shirt for your favourite team, to have the opportunity to give your all for them week-in, week-out? Well, I may never have had the opportunity to do that in football, but I've brought a shirt with me today and I'm wondering if anyone would like to stand at the front and put the shirt on. *(Choose a volunteer and have them put the shirt on).*

Believe it or not, when I see this football shirt, it reminds me a little bit of what life could be like...

### Badge

The first thing that every football shirt needs is the badge of the team. **What Badge is on this shirt? What does it mean? What is your favourite badge?** The badge shows that the players belong to that team. Not only that but the badge is always on the left side of the chest on the shirt. This is because people say our heart is slightly to the left in our chest (it's actually dead centre but the left side of the heart is bigger) so the badge lays over the heart. Every time the player pulls on the shirt, not only do they belong to that team, but their heart is for that team and they need to give their all.

As a Christian, I know that I belong to God. That every day when I wake up that my heart's desire is to follow Him, to try to live His way and give my all for Him.

### Kit manufacturer

On the other side of the chest is another logo...**what does it represent?** It shows the logo of the company that made the shirt. Their creativity and imagination helped to design and make this to best that they can. **What famous brands can you remember linked to shirts? Adidas and Man Utd? Arsenal and Nike?** This always reminds me that we were made by God, and not by accident. God's creative powers and imagination made us humans in His image and we were made for a reason. Just like this football shirt was made to be worn by a player or a supporter, I was made for a purpose. I believe you were created by God for a reason.

### Number

If we have a look at the back of the shirt, we usually see two things nowadays, the first is the number. Every season, professional players are given a squad number which is theirs for the season. No-one else at the club wears that number. This reminds me that I have a place on God's team, a place that he has made just for me, and you know what? He has a place just for you too!

Now, several years ago before squad numbers were introduced, a player's number would often represent their position on the field. **Who do you think wore the number 1 shirt?**

**What about the number 9? Number 3?** Well, just like God has a place just for me on his team, He also has a role for me to play, that's why He made me! I believe you have huge potential, but we need God's help to reach it.

### **Name**

On the back of the shirt is the name. This always reminds me that God knows each and every one of us by name. Not only that, He knows us so well that He even knows the number of hairs on our head!

### **Colour**

The last thing I want to mention about the shirt is the colour. When I first bought this shirt, it was as white as white can be. **But what happens to a shirt when we wear it to play football?** That's right, it gets dirty. It gets covered in sweat, mud, and grass stains. **So what do we do?** We put it in the washing machine with the best washing powder money can buy (or so the adverts tell us!), But however hard we try, it's not quite the same, it never gets back to that original whiter than white look.

I believe life is a lot like that. Have you ever heard anyone say, "nobody's perfect"? It's true isn't it, nobody is perfect, but the trouble is, that's what the bible calls a sinner. Someone who isn't perfect. When we get things wrong, when we say that little lie or get into a fight or disobey our parents, it's like we end up like the football shirt at the end of a game. It's like we're dirty and covered in stains. However, because God loves us so much; because God created us and has a place for us on His team, He came into the world in Jesus, lived a perfect life, was killed on a cross and raised to life again three days later. Through Jesus, we can come to God and if we are genuinely sorry for the wrong things we've done and want to join His team, we can! It's like we become the brand-new, whiter than white shirt.

Through Jesus, our sins can be forgiven, and the bible teaches us that by accepting this forgiveness and choosing to live our lives for God, that we become a new creation! We get to put on the shirt of God's team every day, giving our all for the greatest manager there was, is and will ever be. **The question is, do you want to??**

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16***

***"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13***