



THE EXPERIMENTS

LEADERS GUIDE

**THIS GUIDE IS TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE YOUNG PERSON'S CARDS
AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE FROM FRONTIER YOUTH TRUST WEBSITE**

Funded by The Gibbs Trust
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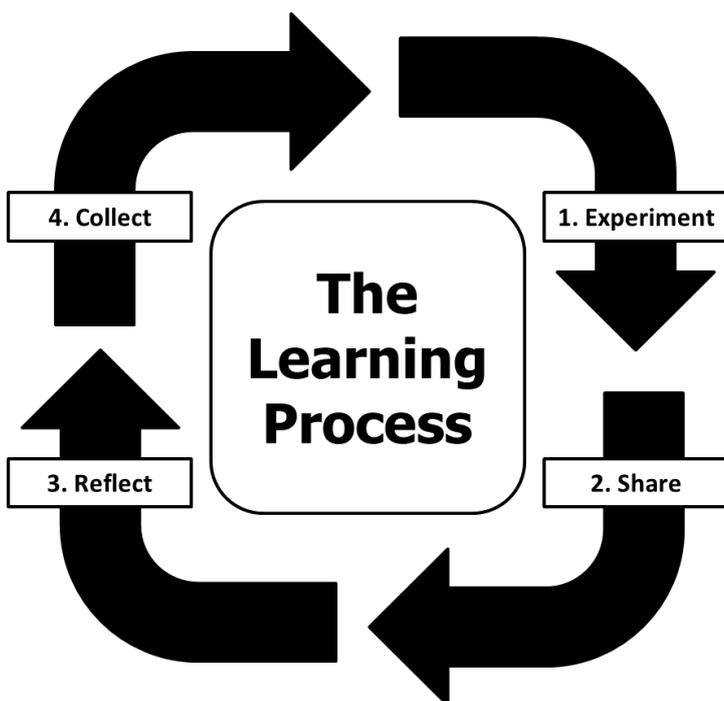
Introduction

Welcome to *The Experiments* – a ten-week resource to engage young people in contextual and hands-on theological reflection. The course is designed for young people on the edge of church and society. It is easy to access, and requires no experience or understanding within the Christian tradition to participate. The resource offers the raw biblical text in an accessible format, exploring and embedding it through a practical spirituality.

The Experiments is based on an action learning cycle – starting with a set of experiments which the group can try throughout the week. At the following session stories and experiences are shared; with reflective activities to kick-start deeper learning; and a regular collecting process to capture learning and celebrate participation and achievement. As a hands-on resource, *The Experiments* requires little reading or writing for participants. Instead each participant is given a set of cards with the trigger text and experiments on. Young people can collect a new card for each experiment to be used as a reminder throughout the week. At the end of each week they can record their experiences and have it stamped by the youth worker. Depending on your group, you may wish to set up a journaling process to support the group throughout the course - you could provide notebooks, put up a community notice board, or even set-up a Facebook group.

The Learning Process

In the Week 01 it is important that the young people understand and commit to the learning process. The cycle begins at the end of each week when you hand out the cards and offer the trigger text (it may be helpful not to tell the group that it comes from the bible so that it speaks for itself). Invite the group to choose one of the five **Experiments** to do during the week exploring the text, and to come back the following week ready to share their stories.



From Weeks 02 – 09, the session begins with sharing stories from the previous week's experiments. Use the three **Share** questions to encourage discussion about the experiments, text and values. The following **Reflect** activities are designed to unpack the text (with its extra clause) and build on the experiences from the week. Pick and choose from these depending on your group. If they have a short attention span, try to complete the session within 15 minutes. Finish the session by using the **Collect** process for capturing the learning from the experiments on the cards – stamp them to celebrate their participation and achievement. The cycle then begins again by setting new experiments with a new text (handing out the next card)

Following a course summary in Week 09, Week 10 is left blank to create space at the end of the process to help your group move beyond these Experiments. Remember that The Experiments is just a small step in a much bigger journey... and as the youth worker you are best placed to discern how to take it forward. We have included some ideas and resources to help you progress.

The text used in this resource comes from Matt 5:1-10; and was translated into contemporary language by a working group of theologically literate youth workers and young people. Concepts and biblical language were crafted into simple phrases using everyday language that would accurately capture the original essence for the prevailing youth culture. The original translation of 'Blessed are...' was re-interpreted as simply 'God is with...' which offers accessibility while retaining some of the original mystery. As a result, participants need to have at least a vague understanding of who god might be in order to effectively engage with the resource. If the group you are working with use a different name for God, feel free to continue to use the local-name-of-god as part of this resource.

We feel that this resource is best suited for groups of young people who have no experience of traditional Christianity, but are together exploring new forms of Christian church and spirituality. We hope that this is a helpful and meaningful resource for the young people and groups you work with.

Happy experimenting!

Week 01

Intro Activity:

Introduce the course and process with some fun pop-experiments. Use as an engaging activity to form the group for future weeks, highlighting the importance of experimental learning.

Bottle-Rockets are a good outdoor experiment. A launching kit and instructions are available from www.rokit.com. Alternatively you can build your own launch device using a bike pump, gaffer tape, plastic tubing, plasticine (for the valve) and a metal clothes hanger. Use small or big fizzy-drink bottles for rockets, and add card fins to improve their flight.

The Learning Process:

Explain the aim and process of The Experiments to participants. You could draw out the Learning Cycle in chalk on the pavement. Agree ground rules for participation together.

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who are poor..."

- Don't eat for a day or only eat bread & butter for 5 days
- Give away something important to you to someone who needs it
- Sleep on the floor for a week
- Give up all your gadgets for a week (iPod, mobile phone, TV, Xbox360/PS3, etc)
- Find out about your local food bank and donate some food

Week 02

God is with those who are poor, because heaven belongs to them.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with the poor?

Reflect:

01: Ask the young people to empty their pockets, and sort the items into two piles: items which are necessary to survive, and luxury items.

02: Play a game of Spoons (card game). Pick out a set of four cards (i.e. 4 Kings) for each player. Shuffle and deal the cards. In the centre of the group lay-out some spoons, one less than the total number of players. Play proceeds with each player simultaneously passing one of their cards to the left (receiving a new one from the right). Players must aim to collect a complete set. When one player collects a set they may pick up a spoon – upon this cue all other players must also pick up a spoon. Play begins again, but players must keep their spoons in their hands and new spoons are laid out. Reflect on the increasing difficulty of play as players have to hold on to more spoons.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards.

Experiment:

A wise man once said: “God is with those who have lost...”

- Play a game with someone and let them win
- Watch or read the news, and hear the stories of those who have lost loved ones
- Visit the grave of someone you know who has died
- Handwrite a letter to someone who is struggling with a hopeless or depressing situation
- Spend some time with someone who is lonely and ask them about their life

Week 03

God is with those who have lost, because they will find comfort.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who have lost?

Reflect:

01: Get a pack of playing cards, and on the back of the cards ask the young people to write different emotions that they have felt when they've lost someone or something. Share the emotions and stories.

02: After the war, poppies grew on the graves of those who had died. Make origami poppies together and share together some of the ways in which we can find comfort in loss. Instructions can be found online.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who choose to control their strength..."

- Spend the whole week without getting angry or raising your voice
- Compliment someone you are jealous of, either in person or on Facebook
- Let someone else have their way in an argument
- Spend 10 minutes each day standing in silence
- Do something kind for someone else that you wouldn't normally do

Week 04

God is with those who choose to control their strength, because they will grow inner strength.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who choose to control their strength?

Reflect:

01: Give a sheet of paper to each young person, and ask them to write their name clearly at the bottom. Then, at the top of the page, invite them to write things they think they are good at, and fold the page over. Pass the sheets around the circle until everyone has commented on what they think the others are good at (folding over each time). When the sheets have gone around the whole circle, open them up and talk about what was expected or unexpected.

02: Challenge the young people to make a house of cards (a pyramid made out of playing cards). Discuss the control needed to succeed, and how this might grow inner strength.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who seek true fairness..."

- Stand up for someone who's been given an unfair punishment
- Write a letter to your local councillor or MP about an issue in your local community
- Make an effort to try and recycle as much as possible this week
- Spend time with someone who is campaigning on an issue (eg. environment, animal rights, gay rights)
- Research your favourite clothing store and find out how fairly their clothes are made

Week 05

God is with those who seek true fairness, because they will find it.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who seek true fairness?

Reflect:

01: Sit the group in a circle. Pour out a variety pack of wrapped sweets or chocolates into the centre. Take it in turns to roll a dice. On a six, the player chooses a sweet from the pile to place in front of themselves. After a while, tell the young people that on a six they may choose a sweet from the central pile or from another player of their choice. Continue for a further five minutes, and then ask if the young people are happy with how the sweets are distributed – invite them to re-distribute them. Discuss what is fair and unfair about the game.

02: Write out different 'crimes' on strips of paper (e.g. cheating in a test, stealing food when you are hungry, stealing for fun, breaking someone's heart, cheating on someone, murder, vandalism). Each person takes a crime, and the group must act as jury and decide on a fair punishment.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who forgive people who don't deserve it"

- Forgive the debt of someone who owes you, whether it's big or small, money or something else. And don't tell them about it.
- Take the blame for something someone else has done.
- Spend time with someone you have fallen out with and haven't spoken to for a while.
- Apologise to someone for something you are ashamed of. Ask their forgiveness.
- Write a list of all the things you regret doing. Burn the list and let them go.

Week 06

God is with those who forgive people who don't deserve it, because they will be forgiven.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who forgive people who don't deserve it?

Reflect:

01: Give each young person a small stone to hold out at arm's length for as long as possible, or until someone else offers to take it from them. Ask the young people about how they could take the (metaphorical) stones out of the hands of others before it gets too much.

02: As a group make postcards/placards that announce forgiveness to the local area for the things you don't like about it. Stick up the cards around the area (i.e. "We forgive the local shop for only letting in two young people at a time").

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who are real."

- Spend some time in silence thinking about how much a friend means to you. Go and tell them, be honest.
- Keep a note every time you tell a lie this week.
- Give positive feedback to three different teachers this week.
- Write to a magazine that uses photoshopped models and ask them to be more real with their images.
- Only wear two outfits this week so that your personality shines out rather than your looks.

Week 07

God is with those who are real, because they will see God.

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who are real?

Reflect:

01: Paint each other's faces. Use the time to have a discussion about how our outsides do not match our insides.

02: Put a mirror in the middle the group and ask the young people to gaze into it. With dry-wipe markers write on the ways in which they can see God reflected in their own image; and ways which they can't.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who make peace".

- This week hold your tongue in arguments, even when you think you are in the right; Listen first, then respond.
- Hangout with someone who you find hard to get on with.
- Do everything your parents/carers ask of you this week on their first time of asking.
- Research a conflict happening in the world, write a letter to your MP about making peace in that area.
- When there is trouble this week in a group you are a part of... don't keep quiet, point out where the group is out of balance.

Week 08

God is with those who make peace, because people will call them God's children

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who make peace?

Reflect:

01: Do a group work activity about peace within the group. Encourage the group to storm (and re-form). Get someone to shape the group around how it operates. Or line up in order of coolness or IQ. Or encourage everyone to be completely honest (good and bad) with everyone else in the group. Bring up the arguments.

02: In small groups, become a guardian angel for someone in your community. Find a nice gift to leave outside their house without them knowing. You may like to compile food parcels, toys for children who don't have much, or write letter of encouragement. Ask what it means to be someone's angel - how can we act as messengers from God?

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiment:

A wise man once said: "God is with those who are attacked for doing good".

- Stick up for someone who is being bullied or rejected from your group of friends
- Talk with your local PCSO and ask about the challenges of being a police officer in your neighbourhood.
- Go to a bank and ask how they invest their money or go to a clothing shop and ask how their clothes are made, is it treating people fairly?
- Spend an hour picking up litter in your local area. How are you treated?
- Write a letter on behalf of someone imprisoned for their beliefs

Week 09

God is with those who are attacked for doing good, because heaven belongs to them

Share:

Q: What happened?

Q: Was God with you? How?

Q: Is God with those who are attacked for doing good?

Reflect:

01: Get hold of a map of your local area, and write across it: "Heaven is a place on earth". Ask the young people to write and draw how their community is already like heaven, and how it isn't.

02: Create a piece of communal art work (temporary or permanent) to say thank you to those who love or do good in the local community. You could paint a mural, use pavement-chalks, decorate a community space, or do an Art-Attack. You could even send a photo to the local paper.

Collect:

Q: What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of? Write it down in the blank space on the card.

Stamp all completed cards

Experiments Summary

Starting with the first experiment, lay out all the cards and reflect on all the answers to the question: "What is important about this experiment that you would like to keep hold of?"

Q: What stands out?

Q: What has been most important to you (personally and as a group) about these experiments and reflections?

Have a week without any experiments to relax and reflect. Meet back next week to discuss what happens next...

Week 10

This course should be run within the context of relational youth work; therefore you (the youth worker) will know best which direction this group needs to go next. Having a tenth week creates the space for something new to develop out of the experiments. You can decide as a team which direction is best, or you may wish to invite the group to decide themselves where they go next.

Here are a few potential endings (you may also devise your own):

The Experimental Ending: The group continues the experimental life, exploring different values, and deciding upon their own experiments and reflections.

The Community Practice Ending: The young people agree to choose some values or practices to live by, and continue to meet and reflect on how they are impacting them and the community. [Try the StreetSpace M+M's resource]

The Activist Ending: The group take on a community action project or social enterprise to make a positive difference in their community. [Try the StreetSpace Zine and O2 Resources]

The Pure Bible Ending: Knowing that these quotes all come from the Bible, do the young people want explore the biblical-text in some form (probably contextualised by the youth worker). [Try The Fast Game from StreetSpace or Glimpses from FYT]

The Unknown Ending: The youth worker walks away and allows the course to be what it was – leaving the group with a contextualised and experienced grasp of the Beatitudes.

Further Resources

StreetSpace and Frontier Youth Trust can provide further resources and processes that may be helpful in managing this Week 10 process, supporting the project going forward, and/or placing it in a wider context for growing new forms of church. Details are available at www.streetspace.org.uk and www.fyt.org.uk

In using The Experiments, you may also find the following similar resources helpful:

The Tearfund Rhythms Website at early.rhythms.org

The Kingdom Experiment by Nuffer, Perry and McPherson

Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love by Mark Scandrette