

## A Brief History

There is evidence of labyrinth patterns in many ancient cultures. They are often linked with areas or artifacts having spiritual significance. The labyrinth became meaningful for Christians in the twelfth century. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem became too dangerous during the Middle Ages and the Roman Catholic Church established “pilgrimage” cathedrals where symbolic journeys could be made by following a labyrinth, or circular path, on the floor of cathedrals.

### Stages of a Walk

There are three stages of a labyrinth walk: cleansing, illumination, and union.

**The Way In**—The time of cleansing is a time for the traveler to let go of the outside world, to shut out the distractions and worries of everyday life. It's a stage intended to release the old and make room for what is to come. This leads us to begin listening to and connecting with the Divine.

**The Center**—This time of illumination is where prayer and meditation continue. This stage opens our hearts and minds to be receptive to our encounter with God.

**The Way Out**—This time of union is when, renewed and strengthened in spirit, we join with the Divine and take what we have found into the world, perhaps with a new sense of mission



# Walking the Labyrinth



While there is a specific path to follow, the spiritual journey one takes on the labyrinth is very private and personal, different for each individual. What follows are some suggested steps for making the most of your experience.

### 1. PREPARE FOR THE WALK

This can be as simple as taking off your shoes, visualization, or reading scripture to ponder as you walk. Some people find a specific phrase or Bible verse to use as prayer as they walk. A related breath prayer is repeating a short phrase, such as “Come, Holy Spirit,” as you walk. Others find walking the circumference of the labyrinth before entering to be an important part of the experience.

### 2. THE INVOCATION

Pray before entering the labyrinth to share with God your serious intentions for this time together. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit to be with you as you walk.

### 3. ENTERING

Remember as you walk in, this is a time of shedding or letting go. You may want to repeat a verse or phrase or sing a hymn silently to yourself. You may just want to clear your mind and walk. You can think of things you need to let go of and visualize those things falling by the wayside as you walk to the center.

### 4. REACHING THE CENTER

This step is often for receiving that which you will take with you. The *center* or *rosette* or *heart of God*, is a perfect place to pray and/or meditate. Feel free to sit and read, journal or pray. Remain in the center until you feel ready to leave.

### 5. WALKING OUT

This is a time for joining with God. You may imagine taking a gift with you to be given to the world. You may want to choose another breath prayer to say over and over on the journey out, such as “Lord, make me a servant.”

### 6. THANKSGIVING

As you reach the end of the labyrinth, say a prayer of thanksgiving for this time with God.

### 7. REFLECTION

After walking the labyrinth, you may wish to process the experience by journaling or drawing. Some people keep a journal reflecting each walk they take. You may simply want to sit in silence, reflecting about your walk. “[People] realize that they are not human beings on a spiritual path, but spiritual beings on a human path.” from *WALKING A SACRED PATH: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*,

Dr. Lauren Artress, p.21 and p. 22



## *What is a Labyrinth?*

The particular labyrinth we have is based on a 12<sup>th</sup> century design at Chartres Cathedral in France. Its physical characteristics include a path that is about one-third mile in length; however the winding course takes place with a diameter measurement of about 36 feet. It is a spiritual tool—as one externally walks the mystical pattern, an interior journey also takes place.

A labyrinth is not a maze. The single path is followed to the center and the same path leads out. Because there is no reason to be concerned with getting “lost” the heart and soul can engage the labyrinth in a more intuitive manner to find communication with God in new, deeper and more meaningful ways.

Each pilgrim follows the same clear, winding path that leads to a center and then back out again. The private and inner journey can lead the pilgrim to an encounter with God that possibly includes healing, transformation, renewal, and peace.

## *The Labyrinth* *A Walking Prayer Meditation*



“It is very important to remember that prayer in any form opens up the possibility of an encounter with God. Yet it is even more than that, it is also developing a relationship with God, one that has no bounds. This relationship cannot be forced on you or on God—it develops slowly over time and deepens with every step you take.”

*-Labyrinths from the Outside In*  
by Schaper and Camp

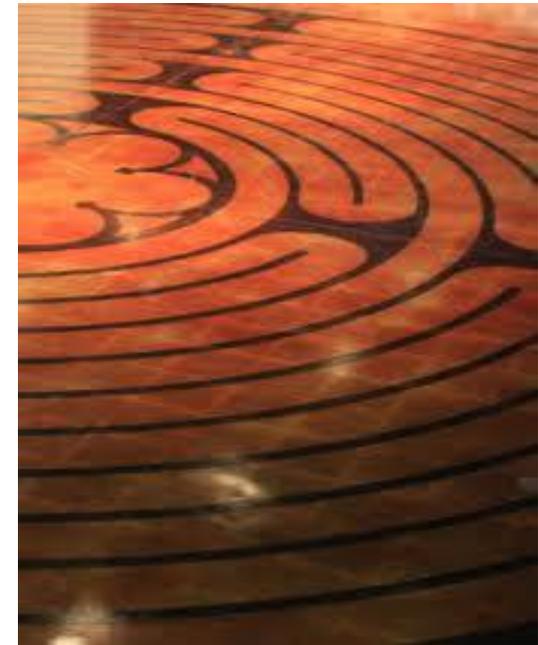
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## *Labyrinth Etiquette*

1. Always remove your shoes before stepping on the labyrinth. You may walk in clean socks or barefoot. Clean socks are provided for you to borrow.
2. Be as silent as possible in respect to others also walking the labyrinth.
3. It is permissible to pass other people on the labyrinth. If someone is coming up behind you on the labyrinth, simply step to the side and allow him/her to pass you.

# *The* *Labyrinth* *A Walking Prayer* *Meditation*

*A Place to refresh your Spirit*



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