



The Prayer

Labyrinth

The prayer labyrinth, also known as a meditation labyrinth, is one of the oldest contemplative and transformational tools known, having been used for many hundreds of years for prayer, ritual, initiation, and spiritual growth.

A Perspective of the Path

One of the Christian images that plays out in the labyrinth is the “straight and narrow” path. The labyrinth’s path is narrow, but far from straight. The image of the straight and narrow implies we can make mistakes or lose our way. The path is not easy, and we do make mistakes. But none are beyond the mercy of God. Losing our way in life is not only a possibility; it is an inevitable experience that is part of the spiritual path. We often don’t realize that the way to God is wide and varied and mistakes are a part of that journey. As soon as we become aware that we are lost, we are already on our way to being found again. The path of the labyrinth is also forgiving. The labyrinth introduces us to the idea of a wide and gracious path. It redefines the journey to God: from a vertical perspective that goes from earth up to heaven, to a horizontal perspective in which we are all walking the path together. This straight and direct path to heaven seems to be an impossible, as well as lonely journey. The winding, horizontal path of the labyrinth reminds us not only are we not alone, but also have the magnificent gift of His grace and mercy. It communicates a generosity about the Divine that we long to hear.

How to Walk the Labyrinth

There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth. You can use the labyrinth in any way that meets your needs.

Guidelines: Take a few moments before you enter the labyrinth. Clear your mind. Some like to say a prayer before they begin. Others spend a few minutes focusing on sounds around them or the rhythm of their breath. Isn’t it interesting that the word for “breath” is the same as that for “spirit.”? As you walk the labyrinth, you are invited to be in the spirit of prayer, meditation, reflection, thanksgiving, searching or play. Contemplate the steps you are taking as you move through the labyrinth. Walk as slowly or quickly as is natural for you. Feel free to pause at any time, and especially as you reach the turns in the path. Be guided by whatever

may come to mind. In the silence of meditation often the most profound wisdom will present itself. Often a wonderful sense of peace envelops the walker. What comes to you is right. Each trip is as individual as you are.

If others are on the path with you, feel free to pass them or let them step around you. Take time in the center of the labyrinth before beginning your outward journey.

As you leave the labyrinth, carry with you any insights or blessings you have received. Some find it beneficial to continue their experience through journaling, drawing, or simply sitting in stillness for a while.

Three stages of the walk

Many walk the labyrinth in three stages, with the hope for self-knowledge and the knowledge of one's relationship to the Divine.

- Purgation (Releasing) – A releasing, letting go of the details of our lives. We relinquish the things we try to control. We empty, quiet, humble and surrender our daily concerns.
- Illumination (Receiving) – When reaching the center, stay there. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you. Here is where people find insight into their problems. You may come to clarity in the center.
- Union (Returning) – Our illumination often produces a grounded, empowered feeling. The walk back out often provides a way to integrate insights gained. Some feel that it stokes the creative fires within, that it energizes those insights. This third stage empowers the seeker to move back out into the world, replenished and directed.

Labyrinth Applications - Spiritual growth

Increases connection with God and inner self...

Metaphor for person's spiritual journey – 3 phases:

1. Walk to center – shedding, releasing, surrendering
2. Center-touch light of God
3. Walk out- integration, carrying Light into the world for service

Other Benefits...

Prayer/ Meditation tool; Stress reduction-balances right and left sides of brain and body; finding one's center or becoming centered; Increases self-awareness - people frequently see images, have insights, new perspectives on issues or life patterns; Reflection and/or memorization of scripture