

Labyrinths: Paths of Peace and Transformation

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Imagine stepping on to a path that was designed to give you a few moments of peace from the world around you. Imagine walking slowly along this twisting path as you begin to reconnect with your soul and with God. Imagine leaving this path with a sense of inner transformation, ready to live more fully in the world. This is the labyrinth journey.

My experiences and passion for labyrinths was birthed during my time at seminary where I discovered the seminary's labyrinth. I knew nothing about labyrinths but walked it anyway and found it to be a life-giving encounter with the Holy. However, I didn't think much of my experiences walking it after that first time. Yet, little did I know, the day I discovered the seminary's labyrinth God planted a "labyrinth seed" in my soul. In recent years I have become fascinated with labyrinths. I have spent many hours learning more about them; the different types, their history, and different ways to use them as tools for prayer and meditation. I find I seek them out wherever I go. They are an integral part of my prayer life. I want to share my knowledge and love of labyrinths with you!

A labyrinth is an ancient "single path tool for person, psychological and spiritual transformation" (<https://labyrinthsociety.org/about-labyrinths>). You enter through the mouth of the labyrinth and begin to walk the single path (or circuit) toward the center. The path has many twists and turns as it leads you to and from its center. There are many types of labyrinths: large and small outdoor labyrinths, portable canvas labyrinths, indoor labyrinths painted on the floor, and many different types of finger labyrinths. I have used all of them throughout my journey and found transformation in each one.

The origin of the labyrinth is unknown. They have been uncovered all over the world and some date back to the age of antiquity. They have

been used in Christian churches since the Middle Ages and their continued use has been documented throughout history. Even in ancient Christian history labyrinths were used as tools for transformation. They were known to be used as a “pilgrimage for repentance” as well as a “substitute for an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem” (<https://labyrinthociety.org/faqs>). They have been used throughout history as tools for prayer and meditation.

Today, labyrinths are used in a variety of settings, from schools, to prisons, to hospitals – and, of course, in a variety of Christian settings. When labyrinths are used in secular settings they tend to be used to inspire creativity, foster community, and give space and time for quietness and safety in a chaotic world. For example, some schools use labyrinths during the school day as a way for students to actively process what they have learned. As they walk, they are encouraged to think about what they learned and try to form connections and questions so that what they are learning becomes a part of them and not just another fact or idea. Another example is the use of labyrinths in prisons as they may provide the only moments of true quiet the inmates have during their day or week. Walking the labyrinth can give inmates important time to focus inward and reconnect with their beloved souls. In both of these settings, walking a labyrinth can be a peaceful and transformational experience.

As a Christian Spiritual practice, there is no right way to walk a labyrinth. In fact, there are as many “right” ways as there are people. The most important thing to remember is that walking a labyrinth is meant to be a time of peace and quiet, a time to reconnect with yourself and with God. You may feel led to walk slowly and in silence or dance down the path singing. Let the Spirit move you to take the journey in your own unique way.

If you need a place to start, use the idea of the “Three Stages of the Walk” as a guide for walking a labyrinth.

1. **Going In:** A time to release and “let go” of daily concerns and the details of the day. A time to quiet and empty the mind. You may find that repeating a word or phrase may help you focus.

2. Being in the Center: Pause for prayer and quiet, creating a time to be open to the presence of God.
3. Going Out: You are beginning to reach outward. Listen to God as God leads you out into the work and the needs of others.

I encourage you to experience walking a labyrinth as a spiritual practice. Take time out of your busy life to experience peace and transformation as you journey down a labyrinth path.

Labyrinths can be found in almost every city and town across the country and the world. The Labyrinth Society has an easy to use Labyrinth Locator (<http://labyrinthlocator.com>) where you can search for labyrinths in your area or find one when you travel.

I pray you will find walking the labyrinth to be a life-giving journey with God!