

Focus on Spiritual Formation: Walking and Praying the Labyrinth

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“Make me to know your ways, O God; teach me your paths.” Psalm 25: 4

The Practice: The labyrinth is a metaphor for life. The Christian life is often described as a pilgrimage or journey with God. In life, as with the labyrinth, we don't always know where the path will take us, what twists and turns the future holds, but we trust that the path will arrive at the center, to God. Once we reach the center, we are in a place to receive answers to our questions. On the journey out, we are sent back into the world, potentially energized and with a broader sense of identity and ideas of how to be of service.

Sometimes people will use the terms 'labyrinth' and 'maze' interchangeably, when in fact, they are quite different. A maze is a puzzle that has to be solved. It may have many entrances and exits, dead ends and tricks, and is a left brain task that requires logical, analytical thinking to decipher. A labyrinth, on the other hand, has only one path. Utilizing our right brain, it engages our symbolic mind and is representative of our life's journey. There are no blind alleys or false leads, no puzzle to figure out. There is only one path that leads you to the center and that same path leads you back out again. The labyrinth is a path of prayer, a walking path of meditation that can become a mirror of the soul.

Getting Started: ...There are finger traced labyrinths and sand labyrinths that simulate the journey by hand. Walking the labyrinth can be approached in many ways. There is no “right” way to walk the labyrinth. It can be used for prayer, discernment, healing, self-knowledge; some find the labyrinth especially helpful in times of loss and transition. It can be helpful to do some brief journaling prior to entering the labyrinth, naming the parameters of your life and what you are seeking spiritually.

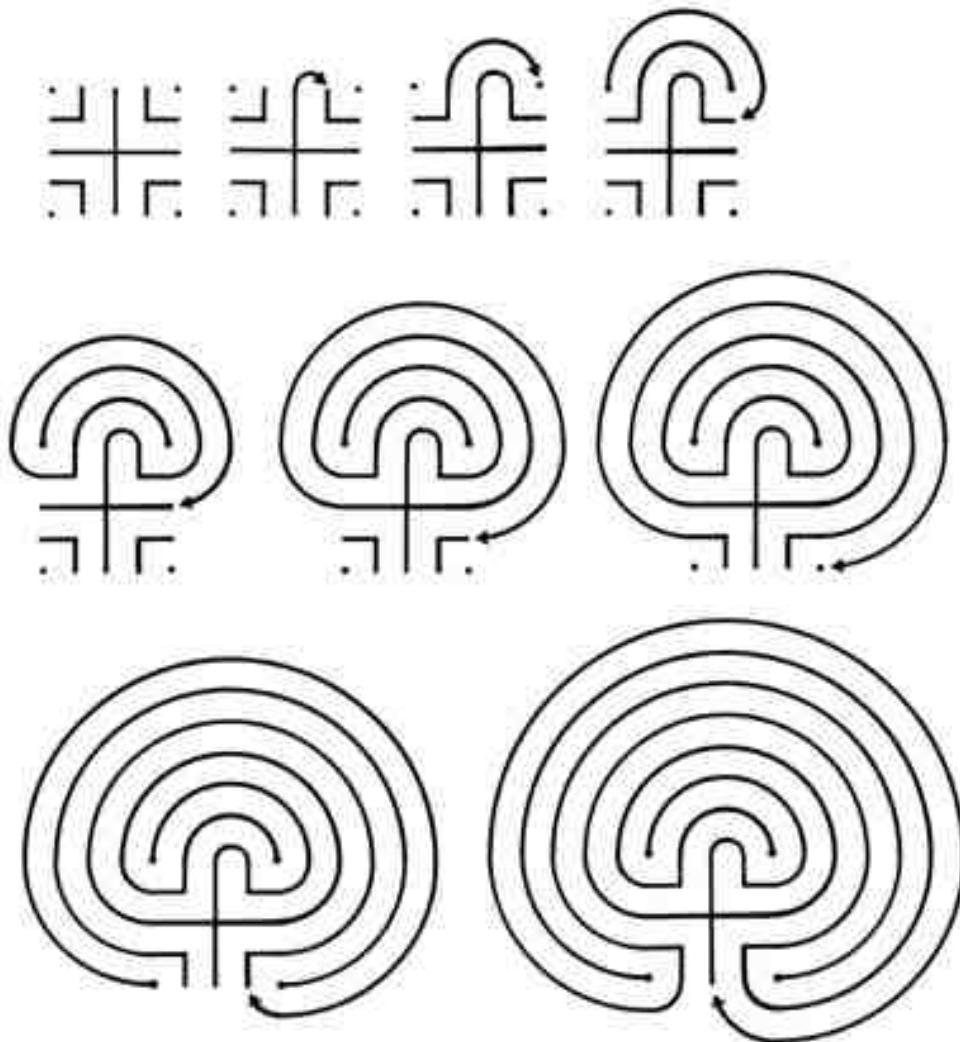
One approach is to think of the walk as a three-fold path.

- **THE WAY IN:** Release. The way in is a time of letting go.
- **AT THE CENTER:** Receive. Rest. Take as much time as you need. Stand, Sit, Kneel or lie down.
- **THE WAY OUT:** Return. Follow the path back out the way you came in. This is a time of integrating whatever you received or learned, and returning to the world.

After you have completed the walk, you may want to ask “God, how can my experience here help me understand my life?” You might find it helpful to spend some time journaling your answer to that question and your experience of the walk.

Background: Labyrinths have been a part of human history for more than 4000 years. Found in almost every culture and every religious tradition around the world, they have been used as meditation and prayer tools for centuries. Labyrinths are created using Sacred Geometry and are typically made of stone, grass, pavers, or shrubs. The first documented example available of labyrinth use within the Christian tradition is in 324 C.E. when Christians placed the labyrinth on the floor of their church building in Algiers, North Africa. The most famous medieval labyrinth was created in Chartres Cathedral around 1200 A.D. The use of labyrinths has recently been revived for Christian worship, in hospitals, and schools as an invitation for contemplative prayer and insight.

How to Draw a Classical 7 Circuit Labyrinth



Finger Labyrinth Template

