HOW TO WALK A LABYRINTH

A labyrinth is a type of walking prayer or meditation that engages the body, mind and spirit and serves as a metaphor for our life and faith journeys. There are many ways to walk a labyrinth. Here are some basic guidelines that may help to make the experience more meaningful.

Before entering the labyrinth, take a few moments to focus your attention on this moment. Take time to consider what your focus will be during your labyrinth journey. Then begin your journey with a prayer. Keep in mind that you may think you need to go a certain way on your "walk" but God may have other plans, so always be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit during your journey.

There are three distinct parts to the labyrinth: the journey inward, the time at the center and the journey outward. Here are some suggestions for your labyrinth journey:

1. **Gracious Attention.** In this approach, you simply quiet the mind, choosing to let go of all thoughts when they present themselves in your awareness. The task here is to allow a sense of gracious attention to flow through you, accepting whatever the Holy Spirit sends to you.
   
   **In:** W.E.S.L.Y (Wherever The Spirit Leads You)  
   **Center:** Be still and know that I Am God  
   **Out:** Continue the gracious attention or consider what the Holy Spirit has brought to mind

A variation on this approach is to open yourself to the presence of God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) and enjoy spending some one-on-one time with (as Julian of Norwich said) your Beloved.

   **In:** Open yourself to the abiding presence of God. Feel his love and share yours. Talk is optional.  
   **Center:** Rest in the joy and peace of being loved  
   **Out:** Consider how you can share God's love for you with others

2. **Repetition.** Many people find they can still their busy minds by repeating a word or short Bible verse. This approach focuses the mind and helps keep distractions minimal. As distractions decrease, the mind quiets. In this stillness, peace and a closeness to God can be felt more keenly.

   **In:** Choose a word or short Bible passage and slowly, mindfully offer it as a prayer to God  
   **Center:** Be still in body and mind, opening to God's presence within you  
   **Out:** Reflect on your time with God in the center, or resume your repetition
A second type of Repetition uses a meaningful phrase rather than a word or Bible verse. These phrases frequently are affirmations that relate to personal experience, such as “I am a child of God” “Jesus loves me” “I am forgiven.” This method focuses the mind by engaging it rather than stilling it.

In: Choose a phrase or affirmation and slowly, mindfully offer it as a prayer to God
Center: Be still in body and mind, opening to God’s presence within you
Out: Reflect on your time with God in the center, or resume your repetition

3. Reading Scripture. Some people find that reading Scripture as they walk the labyrinth opens new meanings and depths in God’s Word. It is safest to stand in silence read a bit of Scripture, then walk the labyrinth as you actively meditate on the reading or simply open yourself to God’s leading about what you have read, repeating this pattern on the journey.

In: After having chosen a Scripture passage, slowly read a short portion then reflect on the words as you continue your journey inward. Repeat as needed until reaching the center.
Center: Take time in the center to reflect on what message the words of Scripture had for you
Out: Re-read the words that spoke to you and consider what they mean for your life

4. Asking for Help through Prayer. Another method is simply to pray throughout the labyrinth walk. The labyrinth is a place where you can pour out your heart, express your anger, experience joy, express gratitude and ask for what you need.

In: Offer your concern to God. Ask for His guidance/help in dealing with this issue
Center: Let go of the problem/concern, laying it before the Lord. In silence and stillness, open yourself to God’s wisdom, guidance and love
Out: Thank God for the assurance that you will not have to deal with this issue alone, knowing He is always there for you. Consider any thoughts that came to you during your journey.

5. Worship: Oswald Chambers, in his book My Utmost for His Highest, said, “Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to him as a love gift.”

In: Praise God as you recall all the blessings He has given you
Center: In humble adoration, offer these blessings back to God as a gift of love
Out: Consider how you can use your blessings to be a blessing to others
6. **Confession:** Using the labyrinth as a spiritual tool for confession gives you time to truly reflect on your sins and how they affect your relationship with God and with other people.

   **In:** Confess/talk to God about your sins  
   **Center:** In quiet and stillness, accept God's forgiveness  
   **Out:** Rejoice in your forgiveness/ consider who or what you need to forgive

7. **Road to Emmaus:** This prayer journey is based on Jesus' walk with his disciples after Easter. 

   **In:** Talk to Jesus about what's going on in your life. Don't try to make it a prayer. Just talk to your friend  
   **Center:** Stop and listen to what Jesus has to say to you; lay your burdens at his feet; rejoice, give thanks, or simply rest in his loving arms  
   **Out:** Consider what you have experienced and how it can be applied to or carried with you on your life's journey

**Resources**

- Approaches 1A, 2, 3, 4 are from *Walking a Sacred Path* by Lauren Artress, pages 79-84. Approaches 1B, 5-7 and all suggestions for engagement on the journey in, time in, center and journey out are by Robin Pantermuehl.
- General Information on labyrinths: www.Labyrinthonline.com
- General Information, sale of finger labyrinths: http://Relax4Life.com
- Download and print paper labyrinths: http://Relax4Life.com/paperlabyrinths.html

**For further Reading**

- *The Lutheran,* November 1999
Color in the labyrinth above using crayons, colored pencils etc. Use as many colors as possible; this will make it easier for your eyes to follow your “walking” finger. Choose a walking finger and breathe smoothly. As you trace the path (from the outside opening at the bottom to the center, move at whatever pace feels right for you). As you do so, you may opt to:

a. Quiet your mind
b. Pray for yourself or someone else
c. Keep a question in mind and feel the question using your emotions

At the center, pause and take several slow deep breathers (keeping your finger inside the center or place your hands comfortably on your lap). Here, many believe you are the closest to the center of your spirit and greater insight is available. When ready to leave the center, or feel satisfied (like after eating a good meal) retrace the path back out to the entrance (which now becomes the exit point). Upon leaving the labyrinth, be grateful and thankful for the opportunity to bring divine strength and insight back with you into your daily life.

Example of how to use a paper labyrinth.
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