

HISTORY OF THE LABYRINTH

The labyrinth pattern has one concentric, circular path with no dead ends.

Various styles of labyrinth patterns can be found in ancient cultures from all over the world, dating back as far as 5,000 years. These archetypal patterns can be found in places as diverse as Peru,

Arizona, Iceland, Crete, Egypt, India, Sweden, England, and France. Labyrinths find form in caves, rock patterns,

etchings, stones, and dance. In the past, labyrinths on the ground have been used for ceremony and walking meditations.

ca Although the labyrinth crosses many sacred traditions, the labyrinth is rooted in Christian history. Some medieval cathedrals have labyrinths that were used as a form of pilgrimage. For medieval pilgrims who were unable to go to Jerusalem due to plague or war, the inward walk of the labyrinth was sometimes used as though it was the path to Jerusalem. The center might represent the arrival at Jerusalem.

ca The pattern on this finger labyrinth is a replica of the great 42-foot labyrinth embedded in stone within the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France, southwest of Paris. There is evidence that the Chartres labyrinth was first installed between 1194 and 1220. From the 5th to the 12th centuries there was a school of philosophy called the School of Chartres. The theory is that this pattern came from the school. ca There is a labyrinth renaissance in the United States gathering momentum and inspiring many to use this beautiful and powerful spiritual tool. The labyrinth engages the body, mind, and spirit through the walking of its twists and turns, whether we walk it with our feet or our finger. ca May you find your essence of source, of center, as you use this form of body, mind, and spirit prayer.

O Barbara Kelleck



PREPARING TO WALK THE LABYRINTH

"If you want to know God better, you should take a walk with God." 4 year old Ann

The goal of walking the labyrinth is connecting with God. One of the by-products of walking the labyrinth is transformation. The key to getting as much as you can out of your walk is remaining open.

There are as many ways to walk the labyrinth as there are people who walk it. There is no "right" way or "wrong" way. However you choose to interact with God as you walk is "the right way."

There is only one path. You follow it to the center, spend time in the center, follow it back out.

Many understand the walk to have these phases:

Preparation

Entering: Crossing the threshold

Moving in

Being in the center

Moving out

Taking leave: Crossing the threshold

Many people have found meaning from noticing everything that happens while they pray the labyrinth. This is a process of receptivity.

The labyrinth can make one's life transparent. Open your heart;

PRAYERFUL WAYS OF APPROACHING YOUR LABYRINTH WALK

Openness - "God, what do you want me to know? What do you want to show me?"

Intercessory prayer - "God, I walk to communicate with you about this person, situation, need..."

In honor of a significant date or transition - "Thank you, God, that I have a new opportunity."

Use a prayer phrase - Repeat one of God's names that has particular meaning for you (e.g. "Jesus, Jesus...?"); repeat a spiritual word that has significance for you (Love, love, love...?)

Reflection - Reflect on your life or something significant that is concerning you right now.

Observe whatever thoughts, impressions, or feelings that come - "God, help me to pay attention to what is going on inside and outside of me..."

As a new approach to an old problem or memory - "God, I need to talk with you and gain new insight or commitment about this situation..."

Walking with a question that is important to you - Identify a central question in your life. Walk with that question in your mind and heart. "God, I am wondering what I need to do next in my life... what input do you have?" Or repeat as you walk. "What is my next step?" If you are unsure of a question, use, "What do I seek?" or "What spiritual needs do I have?"