



## Labyrinth Walk

This meditation uses a labyrinth as a form of pilgrimage.

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## OVERVIEW

An introduction to the historic practice of Christian walking meditation through a labyrinth.

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## Scripture

### ZECHARIAH 8:3,20-22

Thus says the Lord: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts shall be called the holy mountain...

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going." Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord.

### LUKE 2:39-42

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

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## Introducing the Practice

Pilgrimage has been an important feature of our tradition since the days of the Old Testament writers. In Ancient Judaism, people would travel to the temple in Jerusalem for important feasts and celebrations. We see references to this pilgrimage throughout the Old Testament, and in the Gospel of Luke we hear that Jesus himself made this pilgrimage with his parents while growing up. Pilgrimage became an important part of Christianity soon after Christ's

death and resurrection with Christians traveling to Jerusalem to visit the holy sites of Jesus' life and crucifixion. Later in the Middle Ages Christians began making pilgrimages to Rome and to shrines of saints throughout Europe. To this day, pilgrimage is still a very important part of the Christian tradition.

During the medieval period, some Christians were unable to make pilgrimages for various reasons. Recognizing that it was the journey of the pilgrimage that brought spiritual transformation as much as the actual destination traveled to, Christians found ways to simulate the transformative journey of the pilgrimage without having to actually travel. To do so, Christians commonly used labyrinths. A labyrinth looks similar to a maze, but it differs in that it only has one path. There are no decisions to make about which direction to go, and there is no way of getting lost. The path of the labyrinth reflects one's own spiritual journey and path through life. Across Europe we can still see labyrinths on the floors of various cathedrals. Labyrinths long predate Christianity, but they were incorporated into Christian use early in the history of Christianity. They have been used in many different ways, and scholars are not entirely sure why they were first incorporated into Christian use or how they were first used. It is clear, however, that one use was as a substitute for pilgrimage.

Today we will walk our own pilgrimage through the labyrinth, trusting in the path before us with hearts open to the transformative power of this spiritual journey.

## Preparing for the Practice

There are many ways that you could make a labyrinth. You could use chalk on the pavement of the church parking lot. You could set up cones or outstretched jump ropes in a park. You could use tape on the floor of the church basement. There are many patterns from various sources online that are free for use, or you can make up your own pattern. If making a labyrinth is not feasible for you, you can set up any path for a walking meditation that moves from a starting place to a set point and back. Perhaps you could designate a course through the hallways of your church building or walk back and forth between the pews in your sanctuary. There is room for creativity and variation when setting this up.

## The Spiritual Practice

### Journey Into the Labyrinth

As you enter the labyrinth and slowly begin your walk, bring your attention to the present moment. Trust that the path will bring you in the right direction, and allow yourself to fully live into each moment of the journey.

If you have anything weighing on your heart and mind at this time, ask God for clarity and help. If you have a question you are wrestling with, ask the question to God. If you are anxious about anything, tell God what you are anxious about.

After you have expressed this to God, let it fall from your mind. Do not continue to reason through the question or thought in your mind. You've presented it to God, now let God handle it.

Set your mind only on walking —Notice the rhythm of your breathing. Feel the impact of each step as your foot meets the ground beneath. Quiet the distractions in your mind, and open your heart to the presence of God in each step.

## Center of the Labyrinth

When you reach the center of the labyrinth, feel free to sit or stand still for a moment. Allow yourself to receive any guidance that God may have to offer you – about the thought or question you posed to God at the beginning of your walk or about anything else. Ask God to illuminate your mind and renew your heart.

## Journey Out of the Labyrinth

When you feel ready to do so, mindfully take the first step to begin your journey back out of the labyrinth. Continue to be aware of your breath and bodily sensations as you walk, and maintain an openness to the presence and guidance of God in each moment.

If any moment or experience strikes your heart with particular beauty or power, offer a silent 'thank you' to God and continue walking.

As you leave the labyrinth, reflect on your experience of this walking journey and any ways that the way that you feel now differs from how you felt before the journey.

*Duration: 15-20 minutes*

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## Discussion Questions

1. What was this experience like for you? What do you think of this walk as a sort of mini-pilgrimage?

2. Did you find any clarity about whatever thought or question you posed at the beginning? Remember that God often answers our questions and anxieties, not with direct answers, but with a feeling of peace and trust despite the uncertainties we still have.
3. In what ways did this form of active prayer cause a different experience for you than silent, still prayer?
4. How did this walking meditation differ from your normal experience of walking?