

WALKING THE
Labyrinth
A MINI-PILGRIMAGE

PSALM 23



The Springs 

The labyrinth that we are using is the same pattern as the thirteenth-century (1220 AD) labyrinth in the floor of the nave of the Chartres Cathedral in France. It is the earliest version we have of the Christian design. It is unique because of its “rose” at the center and that the cross is laid over the entire design.

The labyrinth is not a maze; there are no tricks or dead-ends so it’s easy to follow the path. You may meet others along the way.

The labyrinth is designed for pilgrimage and served as a substitute for those who could not make the journey to the Holy Land. It is intended that as we prayerfully walk its paths, we open our hearts to be touched and changed by God’s extravagant love for us. After we are finished walking and praying, please write down some thoughts. We’ll come back together and share some reflections with one another. I’ve included some excerpts from *Sensible Shoes* in this booklet so that you can read how others have responded after their first pilgrimage. Take the journey as often as you’d like throughout our retreat.



The labyrinth is an opportunity to go on a prayer journey with the Lord. We deliberately slow down to give God our prayerful attention. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us be fully present to the Shepherd who is always with us, always leading us, always providing for our needs. We quiet ourselves so we can notice the stirrings of God and respond in love, faith, and obedience.

How to walk the Labyrinth

- ⊗ First of all, **remove your shoes**. (It saves it from excessive wear.)
- ⊗ Remind yourself that you are on a journey. **Walk slowly**.
- ⊗ The twists and turns **mirror life**. What might you learn? How does this particular walking prayer journey apply to your life right now?
- ⊗ **Bring an openness** to let the experience simply be what it is. Don't try to make something happen.
- ⊗ You may want to **bring a question**. If you do, it should be an open question, not one with a "yes" or "no" answer.
- ⊗ **Take a few moments before entering** the labyrinth. What are you thinking about? How do you feel? Focus your attention on the Lord and begin your walk.
- ⊗ **Take time after exiting** to reflect again. What are you thinking about now? How do you feel? Write a few lines about your experience and any insights that may have bubbled up for you. If you began with a question: How might these insights relate to the question you posed when entering?



Three Movements


Some have found it helpful to have three movements:

On the way in: **Releasing**—(Let go of distractions, open your heart, quiet your mind, release burdens, identify fears, confess sins.)

In the center: **Receiving**—(Stay as long as you like, worship the Lord, adore him, receive from him whatever he has for you. You may want to use some of the reflections in this booklet to contemplate the beauty of the Lord who is your Shepherd.)

As you leave: **Returning**—Follow the same path out as you came in on. (Enjoy a time of prayer that is outward focused, pray for others and the world, allow the Spirit to strengthen you.)

THOU SHALT BE CALLED, SOUGHT OUT –ISAIAH 62:12

 Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*

The surpassing grace of God is seen very clearly in that we were not only sought, but sought out...We were mingled with the mire: we were as when some precious piece of gold falls into the sewer, and men gather out and carefully inspect a mass of abominable filth, and continue to stir and rake, and search among the heap until the treasure is found. Or, to use another figure, we were lost in a labyrinth; we wandered hither and thither, and when mercy came after us with the gospel, it did not find us at the first coming, it had to search for us and seek us out; for we as lost sheep were so desperately lost, and had wandered into such a strange country, that it did not seem possible that even the Good Shepherd should track our devious roamings. Glory be to unconquerable grace, we were sought out! No gloom could hide us, no filthiness could conceal us, we were found and brought home. Glory be to infinite love, God the Holy Spirit restored us!

The lives of some of God's people, if they could be written would fill us with holy astonishment. Strange and marvellous are the ways which God used in their case to find his own. Blessed be his name, he never relinquishes the search until the chosen are sought out effectually. They are not a people sought today and cast away tomorrow. Almightyness and wisdom combined will make no failures, they shall be called, "Sought out!" That any should be sought out is matchless grace, but that we should be sought out is grace beyond degree! We can find no reason for it but God's own sovereign love, and can only lift up our heart in wonder, and praise the Lord that this night we wear the name of "Sought out."

As you journey, remember how the LORD sought you out and continues to do so. (Lk 15)

Psalm 23

The Lord is *my shepherd*, I shall not be in want.

He makes me *lie down* in green pastures, He *leads me* beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.

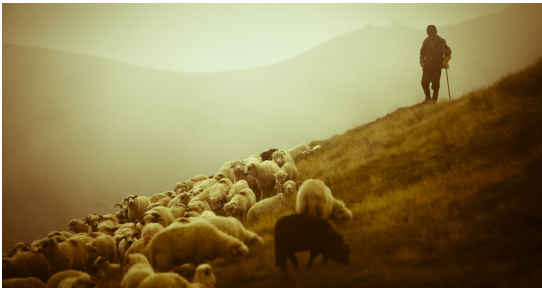
He *guides me in paths* of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though *I walk through the valley* of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for *You are with me*; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love *will follow me* all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



 from <http://concordpastor.blogspot.com>

“As you begin the journey notice what distracts and hinders you. Notice what competes for your affection and attachment to Jesus. The journey to the center is an opportunity to release burdens, identify fears, and confess sins. Begin lifting your heart and mind to heaven. (Col. 3:1-4)

The center of the labyrinth is a resting place where you are held in God’s loving embrace. Linger as long as you wish, receiving whatever gifts of Scripture, insight, presence, peace, or revelation God gives. Simply enjoy being with your Creator God fully aware that you are cradled in His arms, held close to his heart, loved and protected because you are one of his lambs.

Then, whenever you are ready, begin the outward journey. Allow the Spirit to strengthen and empower you as you take God’s presence and gifts out into the world.”

BE STILL
& know that
I AM
GOD

PSALM 46:10



Hannah

“The movement on the labyrinth reminded Hannah of a slow English country dance without the chamber music: people weaving in and out along the twists and turns, walking close together and then far apart, side-by-side for a short time and then turning away from one another to follow the direction of the path. A few had already reached the center. One knelt with his head in his hands; one stood with her arms raised, face to the sun...

Hannah found herself walking quickly and then remembered that being in a hurry defeated the whole purpose of the discipline. Or perhaps being in a hurry revealed something deeper about her pace of life. She slowed down and began to pray about letting go.

As she prayed, an image came to mind...

By the time Hannah reached the center of the labyrinth, she was alone. She intended to linger and listen for God’s still, small voice. She intended to settle herself in God’s presence and concentrate on the “one necessary thing.” But as she sat, she became more and more agitated...without bothering to make the outward journey, Hannah left the Labyrinth and scurried back inside.”

 *Sensible Shoes, p. 59*

Charissa

“Charissa had left the labyrinth feeling provoked and resentful. There had been no moment of inspiration, no sense of God’s presence, no word of insight. Nothing. Silence.

Silence from God, anyway.

Her own thoughts had been loud enough, mostly second-guessing whether she was doing it right as she wandered aimlessly back and forth....

No sins came to mind for her to confess. She tried to appear prayerful in case anyone was watching, but she was just eager to get to the end and be done with it....she wasn’t convinced she hadn’t landed in some sort of weird New Age group...

Now that she was sitting with the larger group again, hearing testimonies about insights and discoveries from the prayer walk, she became even more annoyed.

One woman spoke about the gift of walking the labyrinth with so many other people. She said she was reminded that no matter how she was struggling, there were fellow pilgrims making the same journey toward the heart of God. The community of faith encouraged her and gave her hope...”

 *Sensible Shoes, p. 60*





“As I said at the beginning, you’re likely to experience distractions and confusion as you journey. There may be times when you’ll feel discouraged and be tempted to give up. But if you persevere—if you press on in hope and confidence that the Lord himself is directing your journey and is with you as you travel—it will be a marvelous adventure. It’s also a special gift to walk with trustworthy companions. We need each other. God doesn’t want us traveling alone.”


 *Sensible Shoes, p. 61*

“Notice especially how your current images have taken shape and changed over the years. Who is God to you? [And who are you to God?] And remember to keep a travelogue of your pilgrimage. I’m confident the Holy Spirit will be revealing many things as you take the time to slow down, be still, and listen.”

 *Sensible Shoes, p.61*



Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

 *Luke 15:3-7*



Meg

“Breathing deeply, Meg went over to the entry point of the labyrinth and stood still. *The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.* She began to walk slowly and tentatively, concentrating on the winding path so she wouldn’t get lost. *The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He leads, guides, and protects me. He invites me to rest. He seeks me when I’m lost. I don’t have to be afraid. Why am I always so afraid? Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me. Help me not to be afraid.*

As she followed the meandering path toward the center, her imagination wandered. She saw a little lamb, lost, alone, and frightened, bleating piteously for its mother. But no one came. Darkness began to descend, and the lamb lay down, exhausted from calling out. How would the shepherd ever find it? In the distance Meg could hear the howling of wolves. *Come quickly!* she pleaded. *Come quickly!*

Meg heard him before she saw him: the shepherd was whistling as he came down the path. And when she heard the sound of his voice, her fear evaporated like fog in the sunlight. She watched him pick up the little lamb and tenderly embrace it, nuzzling its nose and speaking softly and reassuringly. His voice sounded vaguely familiar as he spoke his words of comfort. “Don’t worry, little one; you’re safe. I have found you; you are mine. No one can snatch you away from my hand.” You are mine. You are mine. What if she really believed she belonged to Jesus? What if the shepherd really did come and find her...”

Hannah

“As she followed the winding path toward the center, she thought about everything the Spirit had already revealed: her false self rooted in productivity, her need to be needed, her hiding behind busyness. She thought about the death of her images of God, her disappointment and unconfessed sorrows, her anger, bitterness, and regrets. And now that she had actually spoken her family’s secret aloud—

Where was that path going to lead? She kept walking back and forth, back and forth. It was so easy to become distracted by the twists and turns along the way, so easy to lose sight of where she was going. Where was she going?

She was going deeper, deeper into the heart of God. She needed to stay focused on where this journey was taking her, especially when the path seemed disorienting and circuitous. She needed to pause and remember where she was going.

So she stopped walking the path and turned to face the middle of the labyrinth.

That was her destination: being held in the heart of God, knowing herself as the beloved, understanding at a deep level that the flowers really were for her. Even when she had her back turned toward the center—even when she couldn’t glimpse the goal—she needed to stop, turn and face the middle. She needed to stop and remember that the Lord was inviting her to comprehend the breadth and length, height and depth of Christ’s immeasurable love for her...If she could receive the Lover’s gift to the beloved... If she could continue to treasure that image as a particular gift of grace...”

“Worship the Lord with gladness;

Come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his.

We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise: be
thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the Lord is good;

His mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations!”

 *Psalm 100*



www.newim.org

The Springs a ministry of 
network of evangelical women in ministry