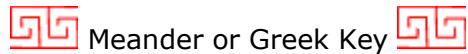


## Walking a Labyrinth

Labyrinths date back to before 2,500 BCE and exist in all cultures including American Indian, China, Tibet, Europe and Jewish mystical tradition. Labyrinths have one well-defined path that leads us into the center and back out again. To enter a labyrinth is to choose to walk a spiritual path. The labyrinth is a large, complex spiral circle which is an ancient symbol for the Divine Mother, the God within, the Holy in all of creation.

The word labyrinth comes to us from Caunia in South-Western Turkey. It was a Greek colony, but the words "labyrinth," and "labrys," the double-headed axe much admired by feminists today, both come from a culture that was there before the Greeks arrived. And this was a matrifocal culture. A time, as Merlin Stone put it in the title of her seminal book, "When God was a Woman." It is in Caunia that we also find the Meander River. There is a form of art from the Eastern Mediterranean called the meander. It is also known as the Greek Key:



Anthropologist, Archaeologist and wise Crone Marija Gimbutas found that this meander pattern goes back to the Bird Goddess of Old Europe, an area that she defined as covering the Balkans down through Albania and Southern Italy and Sicily. Dr Gimbutas traced the Bird Goddess and this meander pattern back to at least 15,000 BCE! That's back when Cro Magnon was painting pictures on cave walls!

Meander is used as a metaphor for walking a labyrinth, the path slows down the speed at which you walk or flow over a longer distance. In this way, your passing is not so abrasive to the path, and you do not draw from the reserves outside yourself. They come from within.

It is important to not allow expectations to get in the way of our experience. When we connect to the Light within, we may become entangled in darkness because our shadow emerges and we are unprepared for its impact. Be open to what we discover in the depths of our being. To discover the voice of the inner world is to discover the voice of the Soul. Allow the Holy Spirit to work within you – the Holy Spirit captures the feminine side of God. She is the cosmic oneness, the receptive part of the Godhead that allows and understands the flow of our lives. The Holy Spirit in all Her mystery, is the power of the Divine within. She weaves each of us into the tapestry of this physical life.

Surrender to the experience: allowing, not forcing, receiving not shaping, accepting not judging.

# Walking a Labyrinth

## *Walking the Labyrinth*

Walking the labyrinth

Thinking of the frustrating turns in women's lives

How empowering to find Christ at the center

where Mother Spirit leads us

As we yield to the path, the mind slows and quiets

The voice of the heart can be heard

Telling us how to be prophetic change makers

If we keep on walking through confusion

Speaking our truth

We enter the dwelling of peace.

*The Reverend Diane Brelsford*



1. **Prepare yourself** – remove watches, dangling jewelry, cell phones or anything that might distract you or others during the walk.

## Walking a Labyrinth

2. **Create the beginning of Human interaction:** begin to interact with the labyrinth. All who will walk the labyrinth join hands. Say a brief prayer to sanctify the labyrinth. Ask the Holy Spirit for her presence and blessings.
3. **Create the dimension of time for the labyrinth:** Each person should think or name out loud a question for the labyrinth journey. Think of the times that this question comes up for you in life. Bring your questions of life into your conscious mind.
4. **Witnesses to the journey:** For anyone not able to walk the labyrinth, sit on the corners and trace a labyrinth with your finger. Alternatively, give full attention to those walking the labyrinth - you perform the valuable task of holding those journeying in your gaze - an essential part of the movement.
5. **On the threshold:** Find the entrance passage to the labyrinth. Be confident – the only turns you will make are where the path meets a labrys shape. Remember: “we carry within our hearts the God whom we are seeking” Take a moment to reflect on where you are in your life.
6. **Pause:** Before you begin your labyrinth journey, pause at the entrance to center yourself. You may want to bend down toward the earth and touch an object that calls you to yourself.
7. **Meditate and move:** As you walk, you might need to find a word, question, prayer or mantra such as ‘I am a daughter of the Light’ or “Lord Jesus, bring me your Peace” as a focus for your journey; Perhaps you may just wish to clear your mind and be open. If you are on the labyrinth with others, make sure you leave a respectful distance between yourself and the person ahead of you. Try waiting a minute before entering to allow each person to find their own pace and to allow the movements of the pilgrims to flow freely. It is important to follow the impulses that arise within us.
8. **Journeying In:** As you settle into a rhythm, you may find that you catch up with the person in front of you. Overtaking should be respectful and gentle – try not to disturb the momentum of your fellow pilgrims. Your journey in opens your mind and lets thoughts and emotions flow freely. In the space of the labyrinth, we can feel our fear as well as our yearning.
9. **The Turns:** It is easy to lose yourself in the turns. Losing our way in life is not only a possibility, it is an experience that is part of the spiritual path. Use these turns to meditate on as you walk into the center. Accept the changes; accept the changes in your life as you move from one phase to the next.
10. **The Resting Place:** Rest, breath and be still. Open your mind to the experience. More than one person can be in the center at a time, so rest there for as long as you like. Your arrival in the center allows you to rest and opens up the possibility of new awareness being born.
11. **Journeying Out:** When you feel ready to leave the center, give thanks for whatever you have found or received there and begin your journey out again, following the same path you took on the way in. Let all the energy that has been coiled up in one direction be unwound and released. You may feel your journey out will be a release from any burdens you brought in. The walk out of the labyrinth is realistically and symbolically the act of taking what we have received out into the world. When you reach the exit, pause, give thanks, and rest. You may feel you need to express your journey in words or with images on paper or want to share your experience with another pilgrim. Perhaps you want to sit quietly; perhaps you feel like running or somersaulting with joy!
12. **Closing the Labyrinth:** Breath deeply into your center, release your breath, sending it down into the earth. Ground your energy. Close the ritual: Stand in a circle and hold

## Walking a Labyrinth

- hands for a moment. Now close down all the dimensions of the labyrinth in reverse order that they were opened.
13. **Close the dimension of Time:** which helped anchor the labyrinth in its surroundings, and in the same way it will bring you back to the present. Thank the labyrinth for any answers to your questions or for any new questions. Think of the times that these answers/questions come into your life.
  14. **Close the Human energy of the space:** Hold hands and pay attention to your breathing. Release your breath, sending it down into the earth. Use your hands to circle up and receive the breath of life, exhaling as your hands pass straight down to root you to the earth.
  15. **Closing the ritual space** Open your hands and send out the energy of your journey into the world. Name out loud one gift from your journey. Say a closing prayer together.
  16. **Leaving the Space:** Now that you have closed down the labyrinth, the circle of your journey on the labyrinth is complete. If you have found hidden emotions on your journey, continue to explore them in whatever way comes naturally for you. Listen to yourself and your needs, take time to replenish your energy levels. Relax.
  17. **Implementation:** This stage represents your life outside the labyrinth; the world where your experience or illumination is carried into and affects your everyday life

From *The Healing Labyrinth* by Helen Raphael Sands  
And *Walking a Sacred Path* by Dr. Lauren Artress

### Prayer when leaving the Labyrinth

Spirit of God,  
I hold in my heart  
the gift you have given to me.  
However confusing, however clear,  
I accept it as your gift for me today.  
May I savor it and respect it  
until I understand  
the treasure that it is. Amen.

*Susan Lukey, March 18, 2003*