

# When Women Make Time To Pray the Labyrinth

Article for Burmese Women's Journal

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March 2009



## Introduction to Labyrinth Prayer

Labyrinth prayer is a walking prayer that quiets the mind and spirit so that you can listen more easily and connect more deeply to God. Recently, a forty two foot diameter prayer labyrinth was installed at Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon. This form of walking prayer has been greatly enjoyed by women all over the world.

To pray a labyrinth like the one at MIT takes about twenty minutes. Although this type of walking meditation is new for many in Myanmar, it is very easy to do. You simply follow the path from a single opening as it winds back and forth, back and forth until you reach the center. After spending time in prayer at the center, you follow the same path pathway all the way back out to the entrance. As a busy woman, you may think, "I don't have twenty minutes to pray! I have so many things to take care of." But I would like to challenge you, ask the women from your church group to join you for a prayer outing, or go alone early in the morning to the labyrinth at MIT and find out for yourself how wonderful this prayer can be!

## Instructions for Praying at a Labyrinth

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1. Before you begin, decide what you are going to pray for. Focus.
2. Stand still at the entrance and invite God to walk with you.
3. Move on the path as you pray. There is only one path that leads to the center. Go at any pace (fast or slow) that seems normal. Notice what is happening around you and make it part of your prayer. If you get turned around, you will either end up in the center or at the entrance/exit, continue your prayer from there.
4. When you get to the center, rest in Christ's loving presence. Reflect on what has happened so far on your prayer walk.
5. When you are ready, take the same pathway back out. You may wish to continue the prayer that has started, or pray about how to integrate what God has been showing you into your life and service of others.
6. When you reach the threshold, thank God for this whatever has happened during your prayer experience.
7. Afterwards, take time to reflect on what happened while you prayed. Write down your thoughts and feelings, or creatively express them in another way (drawing, etc.).

### Special Benefits for Women Who Walk the Labyrinth

While labyrinth prayer is for everyone, women seem to love it because:

- When we walk and pray with a group of women, we can all concentrate on our own prayer while at the same time being in a community of women who are also praying for the cares of their hearts.
- When we pray in the center, we can rest in God. Since most of us don't get a lot of rest in our daily lives, this is a rare opportunity that we can enjoy deeply.
- While we carry many concerns for others with us throughout each day, we don't have enough places to set our burdens down. Many who pray the labyrinth have reported that God has used this prayer to give them a sense of peace and calm.
- We can spend time praying without having to rush to do something else. Although it takes time, many find that it is worth it!

### Specific Suggestions for Labyrinth Prayers

You may wonder, "What is the right way to pray the labyrinth?" The answer is simple, "Pray the labyrinth the same way you like to pray at other times." Feel free to sing, repeat Scriptures, pray for others and yourself. You may wish to try one of the suggestions below:

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- Imagine Jesus walking with you and listen to what he wants to say as you move on the pathway to the center, rest there, and walk back out together.
- Decide to go to pray the labyrinth with a group of friends or church members. Before you begin moving on the labyrinth decide together what you will all pray for. Then walk the labyrinth together, praying for that. After you have all finished, discuss what God showed each of you as you prayed. Decide together what your next steps will be. Give thanks together.
- Pray for others as you move on the path to the center. In the center, rest in Christ's loving presence. On the way out, pray for your own needs.
- Sing your favorite Christians praise songs or hymns as you walk on the path.
- Read a Bible passage or story before you begin to pray on the labyrinth. Think about it as you move on the labyrinth. Be open to God showing you new understandings or applications.
- Identify a question that you would like to think about. Or use, "What is my next step?" or, "What is the best way to help?" Ponder it as you move along the labyrinth pathway.
- Repeat your favorite Bible verse, Psalm 23, the Lord's prayer or "Thy will be done." as you walk the labyrinth.
- Go to the labyrinth with someone who needs prayer. Have each person walk to the center. When everyone has arrived, lay hands on the person in need and pray together for that person. Then, each walk back out individually. Afterwards, talk together about what you each experienced.
- Bring to mind a troubling situation. Ask God to help you imagine a mental image in which it is all better. Keep that image in the front of your mind as you walk and pray the labyrinth.
- As you walk, use your breath to focus your prayer. On your in-breath, silently (or out-loud) say, "God you love me." On your out-breath say "God I love you."

### Scriptures to Meditate On As You Pray the Labyrinth:

- Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27
- The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Job 33:4

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- God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalms 46:1
- For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... Ecclesiastes 3:1
- Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! Psalm 27:7
- Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7
- I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Psalms 27:13
- God, You show me the path of life, in your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16: 11



Women praying the labyrinth at Myanmar Institute of Theology

The Rev. Jill K H Geoffrion, Ph.D., is the author of seven labyrinth-related books. She works with Faith, Hope and Love Global Ministries ([www.fhlglobal.org](http://www.fhlglobal.org)) to introduce the labyrinth and offer labyrinth prayer experiences around the world. For more information about prayer labyrinths see [www.jillgeoffrion.com](http://www.jillgeoffrion.com).

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