

Facilitator Guidelines

In 2001, I visited Grace Cathedral and walked the permanent Chartres Cathedral replica Labyrinth they have on the premises. Dr Laura Artress has been working there to develop the use of the Prayer Journey in modern times. Dr Artress has been vital in developing a three-part Prayer Journey. These three parts entail: purgation--as you enter the Labyrinth you let go of the details of life, Illumination--as you enter the center you pray to receive from the Lord, and Union--as you leave, you leave joining with God.¹ The Prayer Journey began to become a more viable art for present times when Dr. Artress took on the challenge of developing its use for believers today. As I walked the path overlooking San Francisco I connected with the Lord in a deep way.

Later, I was invited to begin to develop a Prayer Journey at Simpson University. My role was to develop a way in which the students would feel directed yet not controlled as they walked the Prayer Journey. At that point the material we were using had only one meditation, I began to produce meditations for the Simpson community. It became a passion for me to develop ways to help people connect to the deep love of Christ. The Labyrinth helped to facilitate people hearing Jesus speak to them through Scripture* in an authentic manner. The Prayer Journey prepares a space for the journeyer to connect with God. Wherever they find themselves in their spiritual journey, the Lord uses the openness to form the journeyer. As you begin to practice this discipline, I am sure the Lord will begin to work in you.

Taking intentional Prayer Journeys is increasing in popularity among the emerging generation. Brian McLaren, in his book *A new kind of Christian*, points out that he believes the heart of spiritual formation for the New Kind of Christian will be found in exercises used in the pre-modern (middle ages) church. This seems evident as we see the movement towards Christ happening among the emerging generation.²

The guidelines below give a brief description of the facilitator's role. Every facilitator has a different style that he/she will use to help people process what the Lord is doing in their lives—just be yourself. The labyrinth's design allows individuals to use it without a facilitator. But if you have a large group, it is helpful to have a one.

- The facilitator of a labyrinth simply helps the journeyer process.
- The facilitator's job is to listen and ask questions that keep the focus on God and what He is saying to the walker.
- The facilitator's role is to help prepare a space, but also to help continue to clear away distractions.
- There are three basic parts of the journey that the facilitator must be aware of: the introduction, the experience, and the processing.
- The facilitator plays the role of a guide and not a counselor.

¹ *The Cathedral Labyrinth* (accessed February 25, 2005); available from <http://www.gracecathedral.org/Labyrinth/>; internet

² Brian McLaren, *A New kind of Christian*, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2001)

The introduction:

The facilitator gives a brief history of the labyrinth, explains the guidelines, and fosters an environment where the journeyers feel safe and protected.

This is a short example of a briefing:

“The Labyrinth has been in use in the Christian tradition dating back to 350 A.D. If you go to many cathedrals in Europe, you will see Labyrinths. There were different focuses for different paths. Many used them as a journey of Salvation or possibly even as a form of pilgrimage to Jerusalem when individuals could not make the actual trip. They have recently been rediscovered and are being used once again all over the world.

As we begin this journey, please respect one another’s focus on God by observing silence. One person will begin walking and once they have passed by the first station others will begin to follow. As you walk the path, feel free to stop at any moment. When you encounter other journeyers quietly pass by them. You do not need to stay in the order in which you started. Stop at all stations and do the corresponding meditation. Please turn off all cell phones. Feel free in this place to worship and connect to God in whatever way you desire. Take any position you feel will best foster your focus on God. You can stand, kneel, sit, dance or lay. This time has been blocked out specifically for you to spend time with God. Have a good journey. Any questions?”

The Experience:

The experience is the actual walking of the path. The facilitator’s role in the experience is to be watchful of the walkers and be in prayer for each. The Holy Spirit forms and guides each journeyer. Because we cannot transform hearts, it is important for the facilitator to pray. Many times journeyers might have questions during the experience, so it is the facilitator’s role to answer these questions as well as possible.

The Process

This could take place in a small group setting or an individual one-on-one setting. The facilitator’s role is mainly to ask questions.

During the process, the facilitator helps the journeyer process through what the Lord is doing in him/her. The Facilitator wants to help the journeyers focus their thoughts. The sample questions are just examples of some good opening questions. Remember, it is not the facilitator’s job to tell the journeyer what to think, rather, simply partner with the Lord in what He is doing. Mainly, the job of the facilitator at this point is to let the journeyer talk and tell their story.

Sample questions:

- 1) What station did you find the most powerful? What made that station powerful?
- 2) What do you feel the Lord is teaching you through this experience?
- 3) How does this path represent your relationship with Christ?

- 4) How can you take what the Lord taught you today and apply it to tomorrow?
- 5) What did the Lord teach you about (what the focus of the path was) today?
- 6) How did the Lord transform part of you today?
- 7) What is the biggest thing the Lord is revealing to you right now?
- 8) In three words tell me how you are feeling right now?

As you begin to practice the art of facilitating the Labyrinth, you will learn much more than is presented in this short overview. Do not be afraid to experiment as you get ideas that could work well for your group. Every group and journey can be particular to that group. Feel freedom try new methods.