

How to Build a Simple Prayer Journey

These instructions will help you prepare a traditional method, give you the ability to prepare these meditations for groups of people, and allow you to use the book *Sacred Space: Meditations for Common Places* with a traditional prayer path, or labyrinth. The traditional meditations found in the book will work well with this path and others. This is very helpful if you are facilitating a group through this experience, and when other common places meditations are not practical.

Meditating at stations along a path is an ancient tradition. There are several cathedrals that have a prayer path mapped out on the floor in mosaic tiles. What follows here are the instructions on how to create a similar path, a prayer path or prayer labyrinth, (or just set up a room) so that you can lead groups of people (or yourself) through any of the traditional meditations found in *Sacred Space*.

One of the first things you will need to consider is the design of your path. There are many designs to choose from. They range from extremely elaborate to very simple. The one described here is a simple straightforward path. If you want to learn more designs, you can do a simple search on the Internet. (For your search, just type “labyrinth” or “prayer path.”)

For this exercise, we will stick to one simple path. For ease, we will make this prayer journey out of masking tape, but they can be made from anything—rocks, pine needles, paint, rope, snow with die, and anything else you can imagine.

Materials needed:

Plunger

Ropes (3 pieces— one that is 16 ft. and two that are 32 ft.)

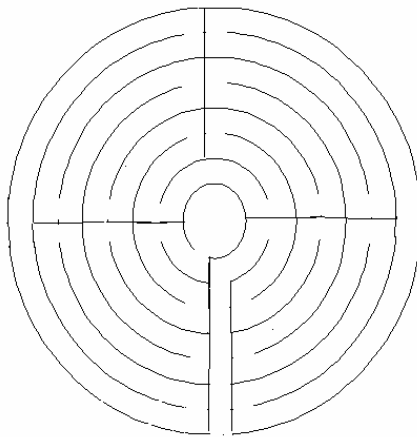
Chalk and masking tape

Tape measure

Preferably two or more people. It is possible with only one but it is more difficult.

Wet cloth

Here is the design:



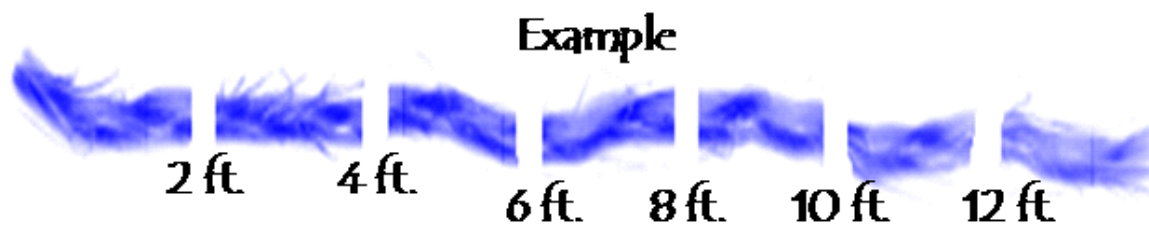
It looks complex, but putting it together is a simple, step-by-step process.

Step 1: Ensure You Have Enough Space

Make sure you have sufficient room to begin building your labyrinth. Each circuit or pathway for this design will be 2 feet wide. The total width of the whole prayer journey will be 32 ft. You can easily change the size by changing how large you make each circuit or pathway. For example if each circuit is 1.5 feet, your floor space will need to be 24 feet in diameter to build your prayer journey.

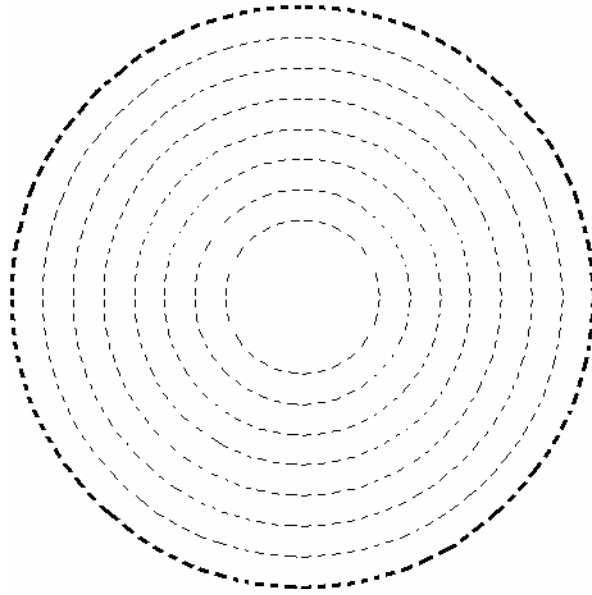
Step 2: Prepare the Rope

The plunger will be your center point to mark off your circles. Secure your plunger in the center of your room. Make a loop in one end of the rope so that you can put it over the plunger that is in the center of the path. Make sure the rope including the loop is 16 ft long. Using your measuring tape place marks in 2 foot increments with the masking tape on the rope. Start you measurements from the end with the loop over the plunger. These marks will guide the drawing of your circuits.



Step 3: Begin to Draw

Put the rope's loop over the top of the plunger. At this point you should have a plunger with a rope extending from it, which has been marked with masking tape every 2 feet. Have one person hold the plunger. (If you are doing this by yourself you can weight the plunger down with a barbell weight.) Now walk around the entire circle with tension on the rope to ensure that you have enough space. Then beginning with the furthest mark (16 ft.), walk around the circle making small marks with the chalk. Just follow the way the rope pulls as you walk, keeping tension between you and the plunger. Repeat this process at the 14 ft., 12 ft., 10 ft., 8 ft., 6 ft., 4 ft., and 2 ft. marks. (See the diagram below for help.) After drawing the circles do not remove the plunger. If your environment doesn't allow for chalk, get creative. One group in the Philippines made small marks with pine needles when constructing a path outside.



Step 4: Mark Your First Lines (The Quadrants)

In this step you will find your permanent lines. Using the two sections of 32 ft rope, place the sections of rope in a cross shape, having them intersect each other in the center of the circle where the plunger is. Consult the diagram below and follow these steps:

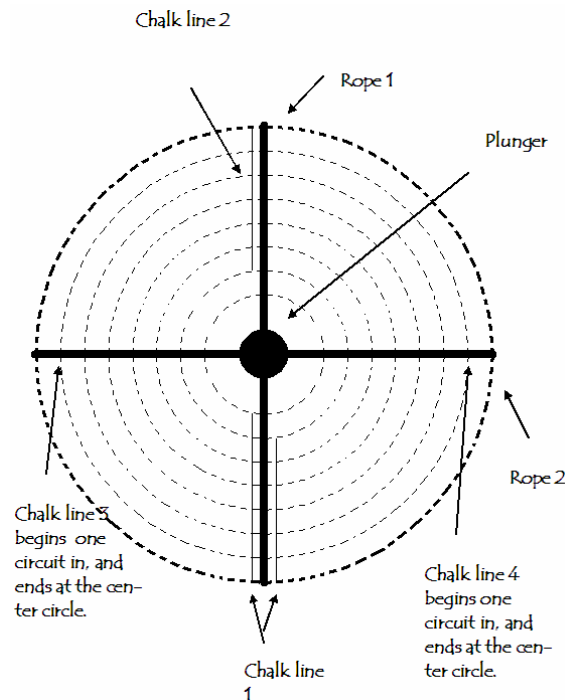
Draw two chalk lines on opposite sides of Rope 1 (at the bottom of the rope cross you have made). Each line should be one foot away from the rope. This forms a two-foot wide path for your entrance. The chalk line on your left (as you face the center) should connect from the outermost circle (16 ft.) to the innermost circle (2 ft.). The chalk line on the right should connect from the outermost circle (16 ft.) to the 4 ft. circle. These two lines are shown in the diagram as chalk line 1.

Move to the opposite side, the top of the rope cross. Stand at the outermost circle and look back toward the center. Draw a line along the right side of the rope (as you are facing the center), connecting the outermost circle (16 ft.) to the 4 ft. circle. This line on the opposite side of chalk line 1 is shown as chalk line 2 in the diagram.

To make chalk lines 3 and 4, draw two lines, one on each side of the circle, directly under the second rope (the cross beam of the rope cross). Start from the 14 ft. circle and end at the center circle (2 ft.). These lines are shown as chalk lines 3 and 4 on the diagram.

Put tape over these chalk lines you just created. These lines are a permanent part of the path.

The diagram below should help you understand what it should look like at this stage.



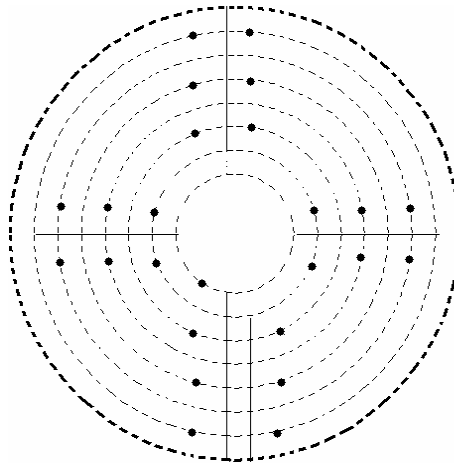
Step 5: Identify the Turning Points

A turning point is the point in the circuit path where you stop at a line and must turn to continue your journey. At this step, you need to identify all your turning points. (You can see them on the diagrams below.) Mark all turning points with a dot on the dashed chalk circles 2 feet out from the tape lines that you made in the previous step. This will give you a 2-foot turning point. Here is where to put the turning points on each line:

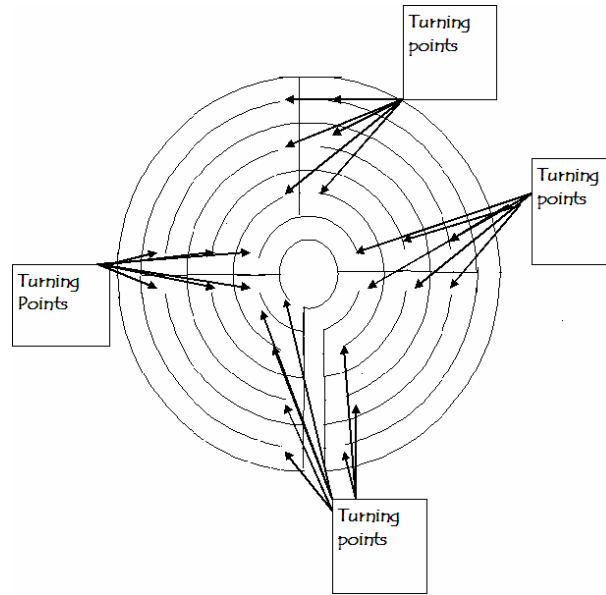
- **Chalk Line 1 Left** (as you face the center): 2 feet out from the line on the 2 ft., 6 ft., 10 ft., and 14 ft. circles.

- **Chalk Line 1 Right** (as you face the center): 2 feet out from the line on the 6 ft., 10 ft., and 14 ft. circles.
- **Chalk Line 2** (top of the circle): 2 feet out from the line, on both sides, on the 6 ft., 10 ft., and 14 ft. circles.
- **Chalk Line 3** (the left of center): 2 feet out from the line, on both sides, on the 4 ft., 8 ft., and 12 ft. circles.
- **Chalk Line 4** (the right of center): 2 feet out from the line, on both sides, on the 4 ft., 8 ft., and 12 ft. circles.

Compare the diagrams below with the diagram above; this will help you start to see what you need to do to get to your final design.



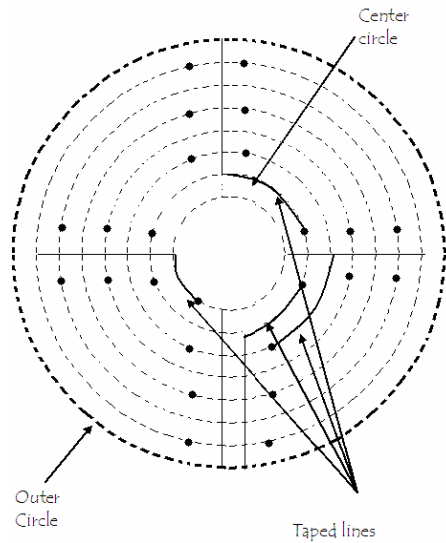
Turning point dots. (This is what you should have when you have marked all your turning points.)



Step 6: Make the Circuit Lines

Now it is a matter of connecting the dots . . . to the proper lines!

1. Connect the turning points with the lines (from step 4) *opposite* that particular turning point. Don't connect them to the lines that are the nearest. Make the line with masking tape right along the dashed circuit lines. Start at the dot and follow the circuit line to the line *away* from the line the dot is closest to. The diagram below shows this.
2. On the outer ring, connect all the dash lines with tape, except for the opening between the two lines for the entrance (the lines that are two feet apart that were the bottom of the rope cross).
3. Connect the dash lines in the center ring, leaving a 2 foot gap between the turning point and the nearest taped line as shown in the diagram.
4. Use water and a wet rag to clean up all the remaining chalk marks.



Step 7: Placing Stations

Take 12 station numbers (or however many stations you are doing) and place them on the path.

Be aware that a large number of people could be around one station at a time. Try to space stations out so that people at one station are not interfering with another station. A sample placement can be found below.

Congratulations you have made a prayer labyrinth!

