



What is a Labyrinth?

The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found on pottery, stone tablets and tiles date as far back as 4,000 years.

Many patterns are based on spirals from nature. In Native American culture it is called the Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described it as the Never Ending Circle. It is also called the Kabala in mystical Judaism. One feature they all share is that they have one path which winds in a circuitous way to the center.

The labyrinth design used by Lauren Artress is a replica of the 11-circuit labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral in France. This pattern, once central to cathedral culture, was inlaid into the stone floor in 1201. Labyrinths have been used sometimes more or less throughout the centuries, and are enjoying a resurgence in use again today. They are being used, world-wide as a way to quiet the mind, find balance, and encourage meditation, insight and celebration. They are open to all people as a non-denominational, cross-cultural tool of well-being. They can be found in medical centers, parks, churches, schools, prisons, memorial parks and retreat centers as well as people's personal backyards.

The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It has a single circuitous path that winds into the center. The person walking it uses the same path to return and the entrance then becomes the exit. The path is in full view, which allows a person to be quiet and focus internally. Generally there are three stages to the walk: releasing on the way in, receiving in the center and returning; that is, taking back out into the world that which you have received. There is no right way or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. Use the labyrinth in any way that meets what you need.

There are many ways to describe a labyrinth. It is a path of prayer, a walking meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the spirit and a mirror of the soul. May you be nourished in mind, body, heart and spirit.