

Using a Finger Labyrinth with Children & Young People

A practical guide to creating space for prayer, reflection and listening to God

What is a labyrinth?

A labyrinth is an ancient Christian prayer practice that offers a simple way of slowing down, praying and reflecting. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends or wrong turns. There is one path that leads you to the centre, and the same path leads you back out again.

The journey often mirrors life itself. Just when you feel close to the centre, the path may turn away again. At times you may feel as though you're moving further away, when in reality you are still making progress. It reminds us that our journey with God is rarely a straight line.

Many labyrinths are large enough to walk. They have often been regarded as holy spaces where people walk slowly and prayerfully, sometimes even removing their shoes as a sign of reverence.

For children and young people, finger labyrinths offer the same experience in a simple, accessible way. Rather than walking the path, participants slowly trace it with a finger.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is this:

There is no right or wrong way to use a labyrinth.

A labyrinth simply provides space to notice what is happening within us and to become more aware of God's presence.

It can be used:

- when facing a difficult decision
- to reflect on a challenging situation
- when life feels overwhelming
- to pray without needing lots of words
- to slow down and simply be with God

I often compare it to a scene from Harry Potter, where Professor Dumbledore removes memories from his mind because it has become too full. A labyrinth can feel a little like that. It helps us slow our thoughts, create space, and become more aware of what God might be saying.

Leading a Finger Labyrinth

Preparing the space

Simple changes can make a significant difference.

Consider using:

- a candle as a visual reminder that Jesus is the Light of the World
- gentle instrumental music
- a calm, uncluttered environment
- plenty of time without rushing

Invite participants to begin by practising tracing the labyrinth with their non-dominant hand, using their index finger.

The journey in

As participants slowly trace the path towards the centre, encourage them to think about:

- What am I bringing with me today?
- Is there a question I want to ask God?
- Is there something weighing on my mind?
- Is there something I need to leave outside for now?

There is no expectation that everyone will have an answer. Simply walking the path prayerfully is enough.

The centre

The centre is a place of rest.

Invite participants simply to pause.

They might:

- sit quietly
- pray
- listen
- ask God a question

- simply enjoy being in God's presence

Silence can often be more powerful than words.

The journey out

When participants feel ready, invite them to trace the path back out.

As they leave the centre, they might reflect on:

- Is there something I can leave with God today?
 - What am I taking away from this experience?
 - Has anything changed?
 - How might I carry this into everyday life?
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Helping people become still

Before beginning the labyrinth, it can be helpful to lead a short grounding exercise.

You might say:

Take a moment to become still.

Close your eyes if you'd like to.

Notice two sounds you can hear.

Notice one thing you can feel—your feet on the floor, the chair beneath you, or the air on your skin.

Take a slow breath in... and out.

Let go of any distractions for now.

Become aware that God is with you.

You are here.

You are held.

You are ready to begin.

A Scripture to begin

One passage that works particularly well is:

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life... Learn the unforced rhythms of grace..."

Matthew 11:28–30 (The Message)

A Blessing to end from the Northumbria Community

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever he may send you.

May he guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.

May he bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders he has shown you.

May he bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

Amen.

Reflecting afterwards

There is rarely a need to analyse the experience. Instead, offer open-ended questions that invite reflection.

For example:

- What was the experience like for you?
- What did you notice?
- What surprised you?
- What, if anything, did you notice about yourself?
- If you brought a question or situation with you, how do you find yourself thinking about it now?
- Was there a particular image, feeling or thought that stayed with you?
- How, if at all, did the experience affect your awareness of God?
- Has anything changed for you?
- What will you take away from today?

Remember that silence is also a perfectly valid response.

Final thoughts

The best way to use a labyrinth with children and young people is exactly the same way you have experienced it yourself.

Young people often respond remarkably well when they are trusted with quiet, reflective space.

Top Tips

- Don't rush. Leave more time than you think you'll need.
 - Create a calm atmosphere using gentle music.
 - Have quiet activities available for those who finish earlier (such as [Bible Chat Mats](#), colouring, or reflective images).
 - Use visual prompts where appropriate.
 - Ask open-ended "I wonder..." questions rather than questions with right or wrong answers.
 - Share your own experience. Being willing to be vulnerable gives young people permission to be honest too.
 - Expect meaningful responses. Children and young people often engage more deeply than adults anticipate.
 - Use labyrinths regularly rather than as a one-off. Alongside practices such as the Daily Examen, they help young people discover ancient rhythms of stillness in an increasingly noisy world.
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Ways you might use a labyrinth

A finger labyrinth can be adapted for many different contexts, including:

- All-age worship
- Youth groups
- Small groups
- Retreat days
- Prayer stations
- School groups

- One-to-one mentoring
- Personal prayer and reflection

For larger groups, consider creating stations before entering and after leaving the labyrinth to help participants prepare and reflect.

Additional resources

You may wish to explore:

- [Finger labyrinths](#) to take away and use at home
- Labyrinth books – [40 days with a Labyrinth](#) & [Walking the Labyrinth](#)
- The Toolshed website resources in [Take Out Summer](#) & [Take Out Advent](#)
- Other contemplative prayer practices such as the [Daily Examen](#)