

Interactive lesson



design from <https://www.peaceaustin.org/Labyrinth-meditation-group/>

What is a labyrinth?

What are they used for? What is the goal of walking/following one?

Have you ever walked a labyrinth contemplatively? If so, what was it like for you?

I would like for you to take a moment to contemplate the labyrinth before you, perhaps using a finger to follow the path. What do you notice about it?

How do you see this reflecting our spiritual journeys?

Imagine you were walking a labyrinth with tall hedges separating the lanes and did not know the exact pattern. How would you know how close you were to the center, or how much further you had to walk to get there?

Who do we have to do that with our spiritual journey, our walk through life?

God calls us to walk a path in life for which we cannot see the full pattern. Our lives are full of twists and turns, yet we are called to keep walking in faith. Sometimes we may feel closer to God, and at other times like we have moved further away. And yet, we are to keep walking.

What do you do once you reach the center of a labyrinth?

Do you ever find it tempting to just stay meditating on and in God's presence?

Once we reached that deep encounter with Jesus, we are to go back into the world, following the Holy Spirit's direction, to share God's love with all. Remember, while we may feel closest to God in the center of a meditation or worship space, God is actually with us everywhere we go.

The path is for us: first to grow to a deep encounter with our Holy Lord, and then to bring awareness of that loving presence out with us to others in the world who need it as much as we do.

Do you leave the labyrinth unchanged?

Thank God; we can trust our Creator's designs for us.

Gospel lesson

Just before today's reading, Jesus had returned to His hometown from across the Sea of Galilee and cured a paralyzed man. The crowds were awestruck, praising God; and word of Jesus spread around the countryside.



picture screencaptured from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-hfX60cE00>

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

NRSV

⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples.

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

¹³ Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples.

²⁰ Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak,

²¹ for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well."

²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." and instantly the woman was made well.

²³ When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion,

²⁴ he said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him.

²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

²⁶ And the report of this spread throughout that district.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Trust and Obey">

UMH #467

Message: Trusting the Unknown



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-the-weight-of-the-call/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Awesome God who calls us to serve,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may trust You more fully and not hesitate to

do the work You put before us. Amen.

We have entered into Common Time, the Season of Pentecost, as disciples considering the “Weight of the Call” by “Trusting the Unknown:”

“This week, we focus on the starting point, hearing and responding to the call. Even when it scares us, or challenges us, or asks a lot of us.”

It’s graduation season! Whether young adults are graduating from college or high school, it is the start of the rest of their lives, a big step, time to venture into something new and different, perhaps scary and challenging.

We wish them the best as they set out.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/abraham-ur-preschool/>

Abram stepped out today when God called him to. But Abram was not a young adult – he was 75 years old, past what we normally consider retirement age. Kind of scary to have to hit the road and start a new life then! Yet Abram trusted in God, and God blessed him in ways that are still a boon for the world today.

The psalmist calls for the faithful to rejoice in the Lord, to sing God’s praises, because our Creator has blessed us so much. But some people do not realize what God has done, with some even proclaiming that

God does not exist. That did not stop the psalmist from calling out the truth about God, nor should it stop us. God's Word can still be proclaimed, and the world needs to hear it, because open hearts exist!

Paul describes at length to the Romans how God blessed Abram simply because Abram had faith and trusted God enough to go where God said. The disciples were blessed simply because they had faith and trusted Jesus when He said, "Follow me." The synagogue leader and the bleeding woman were both blessed because they simply had faith and trusted Jesus.

None of these people had transactional expectations, that they could earn the blessings they received. They knew they were not in control, that God was. They simply stepped forward in faith, trusting God.



background picture from
<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-matthew/>

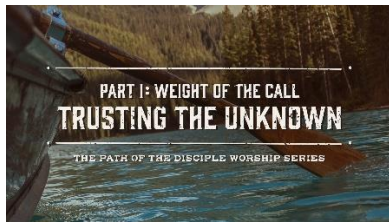
Can you do that?

Can you step forward in faith, trusting God, even at this stage of your life, not knowing where it will take you, but trusting that blessings will come?

Remember, God supersedes transactional rewards with abundant blessings!

God calls us to live outwardly, sharing God's Word and God's love. Some are afraid of the unknown, unnerved by the twisting, confusing path we are called to follow, and think they cannot do it; yet the Holy Spirit provides us with the capability to serve (although it may not be serving in the way we expect to serve!).

Some want to control the way in which they think the path should go, even though we do not have the full perspective that God does. I learned from geocaching long ago that the most direct route is not likely to be the easiest or the best way to go. (We made a trek through a swamp only to find that the dry path circling around it was much quicker/nicer to travel.)



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-the-weight-of-the-call/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

We can trust God to take care of us when we serve God's will. For your homework this week, I want you to spend time in prayerful meditation.

- † LISTEN for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, perhaps feel the pull for God's work
- † TRUST GOD to provide resources for what God wants done, and do the best you can with what you have
- † STEP out of your comfort zone and into God's grace

And do not be afraid to involve others – even Jesus worked with a dozen assistants! Just keep your focus

on, your faith with, God above all else. Have peace and follow where Christ leads. Amen.