

## Brief Historical Perspective On Labyrinths

Archeological findings date labyrinths to the Bronze Age (about 4000 years ago) when simple 7-circuit designs began showing up in Europe, the Middle East and parts of Asia as carvings and drawings on clay tablets, stone walls and coins. Greek and Roman mythology suggest the labyrinth to function as both a place of rebirth and protection. In the Middle Ages, labyrinths began appearing in churches across Europe. They functioned as a symbolic substitute for making a physical pilgrimage to the holy land; a time-honored journey for achieving spiritual and psychological renewal. The most famous of these labyrinths was inlaid into the floor at Chartres Cathedral in France in 1201 A.D.

Fast forward to the 1970's when a renewed interest in labyrinths began to surface in Europe. In the 1990s, labyrinths began popping up all over the US. This was in large part due to the efforts and passion of Dr. Lauren Artress as she helped people rediscover this ancient contemplative and transformational tool to relax and clear the mind. She is a Canon of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and author of three books on the labyrinth. Few women have epitomized the emergence of the new American culture as much as Lauren has. Over the past 20 years, she has been a spiritual pioneer and a leading force in popularizing the labyrinth in the US and around the world. In 1996, Lauren founded the non-profit Veriditas, the World-Wide Labyrinth Project. Through this organization, she has helped hundreds of thousands of people experience this ancient spiritual practice.

Today labyrinths are very much in the mainstream, having received widespread media coverage across the globe. They have been featured on Oprah, the Today Show, Touched By An Angel, Law & Order and PBS specials as well as written about in Better Homes & Gardens, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and thousands of other publications worldwide.