

Finally I Got It! *by Lorette Waggoner*

The Oregon coast can be cool even in August. This particular August, my whole extended family had gathered at our favorite beach house for the week. My personal goal was to finally, at last, definitely, make a labyrinth in the sand. I needed to find a perfect place that would be protected from the wind and tides, so that I could use the labyrinth more than once during our holiday at the ocean. I found a great little sandy cove up near the beach grass that was protected on the north side by a small hill of sand. The area looked as if it could have been leftover from a sand dune no longer looming in that place. I got out my book with drawing instructions and proceeded to drag a stick through the sand. It took longer and was harder than I had imagined it would be to draw the labyrinth. However, the spot I had chosen turned out to be well protected from the elements. Putting the final touches on the labyrinth, I began to anticipate the walk I was about to begin on the sacred path.

Now...finally...my first labyrinth walk. I had purposefully set up the entrance so I could look out to sea as I entered the labyrinth. The simple Cretan design set each circuit in the position that enabled me to face south or north at each turn of the path. My reading about this prayer practice had suggested selecting an intention to think about during the walk, and encouraged participants to pause at the turn of each circuit for prayer and reflection. On that day, and the days right before this trip, I had been feeling stuck and unsure of what direction my life should take next. So looking at what my future held open for me seemed the best thing I could consider and reflect on as I walked. I stood at the opening and cleared my mind in preparation for walking. The ocean roar easily chased away my last nagging thoughts as I began to move into the labyrinth.

The first circuit ended looking south. What a beautiful day, as good as it gets on the Oregon coast, clear as far as the eye could see. I prayed. Then I moved on to the next circuit. This one faced north. Uh-oh, a strategic error! That protective mound of sand blocked my view up the north coast. I knew that a prominent point and a lighthouse lay in that direction. This landmark is one of the most beautiful and most photographed scenes on the coast. Yet for me at that

moment the hill of sand hid the spot. I stood there. I meant to be praying or meditating, yet all I could muster up was a frustration at how stupid I could be for not foreseeing this problem. I could not see past that hill of sand. I moved on to the next circuit, muttering. It was south again and beautiful. Like looking back at my life, I could see every detail, and it was lovely. Then it was back to the north again. I still could not see a stinkin' thing! All that was there was that hill of sand, blocking everything. My focus stayed on the fact that I couldn't see what was north and not on my chosen intention for my prayer of looking at what the future held for my life. After a few more turns on the circuits, I *finally* got it. God's message was that in life we cannot always see what is ahead of us because a big hill of sand, the details of our life, gets in the way. Somehow, however, we need to remember there is a beautiful scene behind the hill. We merely need to have faith that the beauty is there and keep walking on the path with intention.

After my realization the rest of the walk was pleasant. My prayer and meditation took on the regular rhythm of the labyrinth turns as I neared the center. On my way back out of the circuits, I found a feather, another message. The feather told me that I need to float through life, light as a feather. I am cared for and loved. My life path is beautiful. As the Psalmist reminds us, "The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage" (Psalms 16:5-6).

I finished up my labyrinth journey and walked over, climbed the hill of sand, and sat at the top of the rise. I already knew the view up the north coast was lovely. I'd seen pictures of it most of my life. I'd seen it as I walked down that day to make the labyrinth. Yet, in my prayer walk, my frustration at not being able to "see" overshadowed everything else in the experience. I wasn't enjoying the walk. All I could think about was not being able to see where and what I wanted to see. Aha! God was speaking to me! My lines had fallen that day in pleasant places. I did have a goodly heritage. I did not need to immediately "see" those pleasant places to know that they are created by God, genuinely present, and around the next corners for me.

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A little bit about Lorette Waggoner....

When Lorette grows up she wants to be a wise and savvy woman of the world, until then she has been happy to have experienced a variety of life situations. She has worked in corporate America, been a bill collector, a bookkeeper, owned her own office support business, managed an import company, and sold real estate. In her “spare” time she is an avid reader (of almost anything!), loves the outdoors (camping, backpacking, hiking, snow shoeing, etc.) and is regularly called the “Queen of Fires” by her camping cronies. She also loves to cook and entertain; delving into history, historic homes and antiques as well as trying new spiritual practices such as walking labyrinths and praying with beads. She is active in her congregation at First Christian Church in Eugene Oregon and in the Christian Church in Oregon’s Women’s Ministries. She has taught and facilitated classes and workshops, held most every office, been an elder, planned and facilitated retreats (for both youth and adults), and generally enjoyed sharing her gifts with her church family. She has a love of solitude and retreating in general and an inspiration to share her love of nature’s restorative and re-creational aspects.