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The best definition I've ever heard for the word "spirituality" comes from a book entitled *Coming Out Spiritually: The Next Step* by Christian De La Huerta. This is a book by a gay man who believes, as I do, that coming out spiritually is the next step of maturation for the GLBT community. Many GLBT folks have tabled, even arrested, their spiritual maturation process because of the magnitude of abuse they have received at the hands of pathological theologues. In spite of this terrible reality coming to terms with our spiritual orientations is just as important, just as essential, as coming to terms with our sexual and gender orientations if we are to know genuine wholeness and health in our lives.

De La Huerta's definition is this: spirituality is the willingness to be sourced by something other than ourselves. This definition reverberates so truthfully for me that I tell as many people as I can about it. This definition never fails to convey the authenticity on which it rests. It is broad enough to include every spiritual path known to humanity and clear enough to convey that not a one of us can live well without being sourced by something other than ourselves.

I believe that The Beloved Creator of All Life intended each of us to struggle with and define for ourselves what the sources "other than ourselves" need to be.

In fact, I believe the purpose for a spiritual being having a human experience is all about doing the work of figuring out what sources other than ourselves really deepen, strengthen, and nurture our relationship with The Beloved Creator, our planet, each other, and ourselves. This is the spiritual journey about which so many speak but few ever really define, and it's why there are as many spiritual paths as there are.

Some of us are sourced by beautiful music, while others of us are sourced by the vast and astounding world of nature and our universe. Some of us are sourced by religious rituals, traditions and scriptures, while others of us are sourced by serving others out of a deep compassion for their plights. Some of us are sourced by being actively involved in justice-making, while some of us are sourced by living quiet lives of prayerful reflection. Some of us are sourced by being artists, writers, dancers, and visionaries, while some of us are sourced by the work of such people. Some of us are sourced by serving as guides and mentors to those seeking authentic lives, while some of us are sourced by giving back double portions of what we have received.

I hope that it is obvious by now that there is no single, one and only one way to be sourced by something other than ourselves, in spite of what many

religious traditions preach and teach. It is important to note, however, that being sourced by something other than ourselves does not include gorging ourselves on things that do not really source us in the ways we need to be sourced. What we choose to be sourced by does make a qualitative difference. Those who choose to be sourced by too much money, food, power, drugs, alcohol, status, and/or stuff tend to wonder why they wake up feeling empty and unfulfilled when the time comes to take stock of how they have lived their lives. Learning the differences between the junk-food sources and the nutritional sources is a big part of the spiritual journey.

This December, as we consider where we are in our spiritual journeys, I hope we will all make time to consider what sources other than ourselves really matter to us, really nourish and strengthen us in our daily lives and relationships. In so doing, we will deepen a faith that matters and makes a difference in our lives for the better.

Perhaps we might not overspend any of our precious resources this holiday season in pursuit of that which really does not source us after all. Perhaps we might even experience a truly sacred and holy holiday season as we ponder what it means to be spiritual beings having a human experience.


Rev. Christine Leslie, a pastoral counselor in private practice near Burlington, Co-director of The Samadhi Singers, & the Protestant Campus Minister at UVM, can be reached at 802-860-7106 or revcsl@aol.com. ▼

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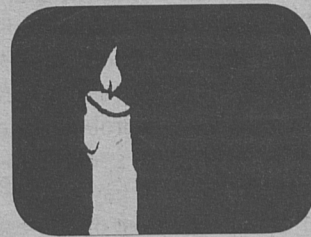
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