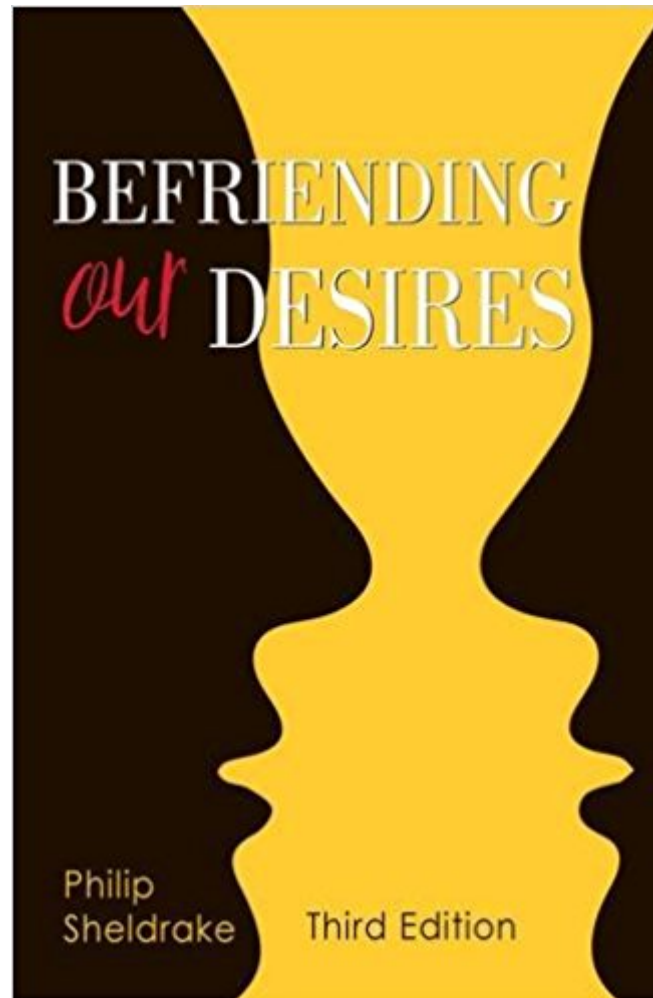




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# Befriending Our Desires



## Synopsis

Desire is at the heart of what it is to be human. The power of desire, while embodied and sensuous, is God-given and the key to all human spirituality. Humanity is blessed with a deep longing that is infinite in extent and can only ultimately be satisfied in God. *Befriending Our Desires* portrays the intimate connection between desire and the spiritual journey. Drawing on Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, Christian spiritual classics (with some reference to Buddhist spirituality), poetry, and other literature, plus personal and pastoral experience, Philip Sheldrake explores the role of desire in relation to God, prayer, sexuality, making choices, and responding to change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*Befriending Our Desires* is a deeply considered and artfully written celebration of the human capacity for self-transcendence. Sheldrake plumbs the mystery of human desire in all its rich variety: its spiritual dynamism, the mature cultivation and direction of its intrinsic power, its relational implications, and its ultimate goodness. A beautiful and encouraging book." Wendy M. Wright, PhD, Professor of Theology, Creighton University

"*Befriending Our Desires* is a thoroughly learned and readable book that offers a dynamic vision of Christian spirituality. Philip Sheldrake retrieves desire as a key dimension of a fully embodied, vulnerable, and authentic spirituality. Always informed by Sheldrake's deep knowledge of the Christian tradition, the book presents carefully nuanced readings of Scriptures, mystics, poets, theologians, and theorists while remaining in touch with ordinary human struggles toward growth. Delighted to see this third edition in print!" Claire

Wolfteich, Associate Professor of Practical Theology and Spirituality Studies, Co-Director, Center for Practical Theology, Boston University School of Theology

"The ache of the heart is the lure of God. Few writers explicate so clearly that intricate, yet intimate, interconnection. Philip Sheldrake does. He is truly a doctor of the soul, and this book is proof. Highly recommended for anyone who is searching for a more coherent grasp of their spiritual life."

Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

"An extraordinarily beautiful and honest account of the role of desire in the spiritual life. Not a sanitized version, but a fully embodied, deeply human depiction of longing that is bound up with our humanity but also mysteriously reaches out and into something not entirely nameable or knowable—as our longings so often do."

Douglas E. Christie, Department of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University

Philip Sheldrake has taught, spoken, and written extensively about Christian spirituality and spirituality more generally. Over the years he has been involved in spiritual accompaniment and in workshops for professional groups interested in spirituality as well as being a leader in the academic field of spirituality. He is senior research fellow at Westcott House Cambridge Theological Federation and director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Spirituality at Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas.

Excellent ... much here to ponder and to enrich the faith journey. I appreciate very much the focus on Ignatian Spirituality and how awareness and the roots of our various desires are central to the movements of God in our lives

The book arrived very quickly and is in excellent condition.

This book is absolutely wonderful. If you know Ignatian Spirituality or not it will take you to the depths of our desires and those of God and how they become one. The area of sexuality is treated with great reverence and beauty. I would recommend it to anyone serious about spiritual growth and understanding.

The book came through in even better condition than I expected. It is a great explication of desire as it relates to spiritual journey.

I once berated a preacher who was moralising about people with AIDs, saying that they bought it on themselves by their promiscuity. I pointed out that Augustine speaks of a "God-shaped hole" which we seek to fill. I reckon that people who seek casual encounters are really looking for love, in which case they are looking, ultimately, for God. Instead of condemning desire,

we should be seeking to refine it. The author argues that 'desire' should be placed at the centre of the spiritual life: the concrete reality of passion has always been linked to the human search for the divine. God can be found at the heart of all desire. This book has become something of a classic. The vocabulary of religious experience and that of sexual love have much in common, dwelling on desire, longing, yearning; but post-enlightenment Western Christianity has valued the rational and controlled rather than the vulnerability of passion. The abandonment, the commitment of desire can be a spiritual experience; learning to deal with our desires is essential to our spiritual development, our search and yearning for God. Sexuality is part of this, but desire must not be linked exclusively to sex.

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This is one of the most captivating books I have ever read on the essential role desire plays in the transforming work of Christ in us. As someone who grew up with a Baptist background where desires were something to flee and renounce, this book compellingly demonstrates that connection to our God-given, deepest desires is a journey that excavates our true selves...the people we were created to be at the foundations of the world, in wholeness, with passion, and life! This will become a key book for me here forward in the sacred work of both tending to my own soul, and those whom I serve.

Sheldrake does a nice job of demonstrating why desire is necessary and valuable and even

inherently integrated into life, particularly the spiritual life. However, his language and arguments are a little unfocused, which made it somehow feel weighty and fluffy simultaneously, as if there was something important that needed to be constructed out of insubstantial and blurry thoughts. Additionally, he waded now and then into theologically dubious territory such as asserting that God's desire for humanity equated to God's need for humanity. It could be a worthwhile book for some people, but I'd be cautious about to whom I would offer it.

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