BOUNDARIES FOR YOUR SOUL
How to Turn Your Overwhelming Thoughts and Feelings into Your Greatest Allies
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INTRODUCTION

1. This book is about learning to set internal boundaries—bringing overwhelming parts of yourself into healthy relationship with God and what is called your Holy Spirit-led self (or Spirit-led self for short.) At first glance, how does this idea strike you? Does it make sense?

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2. Are you familiar with the idea of setting external boundaries with others? Have you worked on this issue in your life? How?

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3. List some of the ways you are aware of being hurt and wounded within. Do you have any sense of ways that these wounds may limit your ability to be your best self, experience peace, and do the work God has in mind for you to do?

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4. Page xviii lists five questions to ask yourself as you work through this book. Which of these questions seem to connect most clearly with your life? What other questions would you like to have answered in the course of this study?

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5. Having read the Introduction, what expectations do you have for this book? What do you hope to accomplish from reading it?

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PART ONE

REIMAGINING YOUR SOUL
CHAPTER 1
WHY BOUNDARIES FOR YOUR SOUL?

1. Do you relate to any of the five people described at the beginning of the chapter? How would you describe your own inner struggles (if any)?

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2. What definition of the soul are the authors working from? Is their idea of the soul the same as yours? How do the authors describe caring for the soul?

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3. The authors maintain that “the health of your relationships and the sustainability of your service depend on your ability to make wise decisions about how you spend your time.” In what ways does this statement describe you currently? In what ways do you think your internal boundaries might need work?

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4. According to this chapter, what are two opposite, unhealthy ways of relating to painful emotions? What are some signs that a person is reacting in either of these unhealthy ways? Which of these signs resonate with you the most?

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5. What do the authors mean by “taking a You-Turn”? What are the Five Steps involved?
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6. What, according to the chapter, do the Bible characters and the everyday people described in this chapter have in common? What characteristics of their stories resonate with you?
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7. Take the Internal Boundaries Quiz at the end of this chapter and tally your results. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?
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CHAPTER 2
YOUR SPIRIT-LED SELF

1. Describe any “well-meaning, but quarreling” parts of your personality that you think may be struggling for control in your life.

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2. What do the authors describe as “phase one” of God’s plan for human beings? 
   What was phase two?

3. What three aids does God give us now to live whole, healthy lives that are pleasing to him?

4. How does this chapter define the “Spirit-led self” and “Spirit-led self-leadership? How could you - or the people in your life - tell that you are living from your Spirit-led self? 
   How would you know if you are speaking or acting from a part vs. this Spirit-led self?
5. What is the difference between “befriending” the parts of you that sin and condoning sin itself? What’s the benefit of knowing the difference?

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6. What are some of the questions that have arisen in your mind as you read this chapter and the previous one? Have they been answered yet?

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CHAPTER 3
THREE PARTS OF YOU

1. This chapter references the animated movie *Inside Out*. Have you seen it? If so, how did you respond to the portrayal of human emotions in this movie? (If you have access to this film on DVD or through a streaming device, consider watching it as a way of enriching your experience of this book.)

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2. According to this chapter, what are the three main categories of “parts” in the human soul (in addition to the Spirit-led self)? What does it mean to establish healthy boundaries with parts of your soul?

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3. What are the two different kinds of “protectors”? How do they function to keep you from pain? List at least three thoughts, feelings, or actions signaling that a person needs healthier boundaries with a protector.

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4. What are internal “exiles,” and how can they be recognized? What is the danger they pose if they aren’t befriended? List at least three thoughts, feelings, or actions that could signal a person needs healthier boundaries with an exiled part.

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5. From what you’ve read in this chapter, how would you describe the manager, firefighter, or an exile parts in your soul? Write down what healthier boundaries with these parts of your soul would look like in your life.
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6. How do you respond to the idea of welcoming or “befriending” the unruly or difficult parts of your soul and showing them love and care? How exactly would you go about doing so? (If you’re unsure, keep on reading!)
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7. How do you respond to the idea of having a “baptized imagination”? Is this idea something you’re comfortable with? Why or why not?

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8. Read Psalm 86:11-12 two or three times. (If you wish, write the verses down on an index card, a sticky note, or in your phone and carry them with you for a week, rereading them often. Say them aloud to someone by memory.) What would it mean to you personally to have an undivided heart?

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PART TWO

THE FIVE STEPS OF TAKING A YOU-TURN
1. Review the steps of taking a You-Turn as outlined in chapter 1. What is the purpose of focusing on a specific part of your soul as the first step in taking a You Turn?

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2. Have you ever thought of asking parts of yourself to give you some space or step back a little so that you can focus on another specific part? Do you think such an inner dialogue would really work? Why or why not?

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3. What four steps did Lin take in focusing on her anger?

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4. Why do you think the process of focus begins with assessing what you’re experiencing physically? How does the state of our soul influence the state of our body, and vice versa?

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5. Who would you say you really are? How does this book’s way of understanding your soul help you answer that question?

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6. What does it mean to speak on behalf of a part rather than from it? What are some advantages of this strategy?

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7. According to this chapter, how can overwhelming parts of yourself—the ones you wish would go away—actually hold keys to freedom and joy? Do you have a hard time believing this idea?

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8. Try the exercise at the end of the chapter. When you’re through, reflect on it and the chapter as a whole. Jot down three insights that stand out in your mind.

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1. “Jesus taught to love your enemies. What if he meant not only your external enemies, but also the perceived enemies within?” Make a list of any “internal enemies” that come to mind for you—parts of your soul that you dislike or that give you trouble. Could you try to view each part as valuable, and extend yourself compassion?

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2. This book repeatedly points to curiosity as a powerful ally in the process of taking a You-Turn and creating healthy internal boundaries. Why do you think curiosity makes such a difference? Could you become curious now, in the process of befriending your internal enemies?

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3. How do you think the Henri Nouwen quote about hospitality applies to the process of befriending an internal enemy? Can you actually show hospitality toward overwhelming parts of yourself? If so, how?

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4. Based on what you've read in this chapter (and your answer to question 5 in chapter 3), what are some of the managers or firefighters you might need to befriend and win over? How might you begin to appreciate and befriend these faithful protectors?

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5. Name at least one exile in you that may need your kindness and appreciation. What could you do to give this exile the attention it needs? (Note: if you are reading this book in a group, sharing these specifics about yourself is optional.)

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6. What insights and obstacles are you finding as you try on this new way of thinking about the different parts of your soul?

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7. According to this chapter, what is the key to keeping uncomfortable and extreme thoughts and feelings in check? How would you know that this strategy is working in your life?

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8. Try the exercise at the end of the chapter. When you’ve finished, write down any insights or reactions you had to doing it.

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1. According to this chapter, what are the three kinds of parts of our souls that correspond to people Jesus encountered in his day?

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2. How did Jesus typically respond to the *sanctimonious* religious leaders he encountered? What parts of us sometimes sound like these leaders? What happens if these parts are too near or too far to us, and not being led by the Spirit-led self? What invitation might Jesus have for these controlling parts?

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3. How did Jesus typically respond to the *straying* sinners he encountered? What parts of us stray like these Bible characters? What happens if these parts of our souls are too near or too far, and not under the leadership of the Spirit-led self? How might Jesus befriend these wandering parts?

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4. How did Jesus typically respond to the *suffering* people he encountered? What parts of us are suffering? What happens if these parts are too near or too far, and not under the leadership of the Spirit-led self? What do you imagine Jesus would say or do if he were to draw near these suffering parts?

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5. Does it make sense to you that you can be committed to Christ while parts of yourself are still doubting, or distant from him? What difference could this concept make in your life or the life of someone you care about?

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6. According to this chapter, how can our protectors and exiles sometimes take over, and affect how we relate to others and to Jesus?

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7. How can understanding that we have protectors and exiles help us draw closer to God? How do you think this way of thinking could change or enrich a person's prayer life and spiritual life in general?

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8. Once again, try out the exercise at the end of the chapter. What were the results? Write down any insights or questions that arose from doing this exercise.

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CHAPTER 7
STEP FOUR: UNBURDEN

1. What’s the difference between taking problems away and making them “easy and light,” as Jesus promises? What image or metaphor does the chapter use to describe problems we’re expected to carry and problems we need to lay down?

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2. What are the three kinds of burdens that this chapter delineates? Where do these burdens come from?

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3. How do you respond to the idea of “legacy” burdens? Can you recognize any of these feeling-burdens or belief-burdens in your life, the life of someone you know, or the life of someone you know about?

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4. According to this chapter, why does unburdening involve “updating”? Why is updating helpful?

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5. What are four examples of things that protectors (whether managers and firefighters) might fear about the process of unburdening? What do they want to avoid at all costs? What do they most need to know?

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6. What five things can exiles fear about the process of unburdening?

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7. Why do exiles sometimes fear getting well? Have you ever seen or experienced this fear?

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8. This chapter suggests six possible biblical images or metaphors to help people unburden parts of them that are carrying too much pain. Which, if any, speak to you? Can you think of any others?

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9. Another strategy mentioned in this chapter is that of renaming an unburdened exile. Why do you (or don't you) think this strategy would be effective? What new names would you like to have, when you think of the areas of suffering in your life?
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10. Why is it so important to help an unburdened exile give up its passive rescue wishes and victim mindset? What good things could happen as a result?
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11. Work through the exercise at the end of the chapter. When you’ve finished, reflect on the experience and share any new insights.
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1. How does this chapter describe “internal polarization” and “internal reconciliation”? What thoughts or feelings do these two descriptions trigger in you?

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2. How do you know when two parts of you are at war? According to this chapter, what is the best way to resolve an internal polarization and develop a sense of internal peace?

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3. According to this chapter, what does it mean to build a “team of rivals” within yourself? Can you imagine your own team of rivals sitting around a table? What parts would be there? If they were to negotiate and work together, what new roles might each one take on?

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4. How can integrating the parts of your soul increase your compassion and your ability to serve others? Would being more integrated give you more confidence and courage and help you live out your life’s purpose?

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5. This chapter uses a garden as a metaphor for the human soul. Read through the description in this chapter. Can you think of another metaphor that expresses the same concept?

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6. Work through the exercise at the end of the chapter. When you’ve finished, reflect on the experience and share any new insights.

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1. Looking back over the first two parts of this book, you should have a sense of what it means to take a You-Turn. As a review, write down the five steps that are involved in doing this.

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2. At this point, do you have a better sense of any parts of yourself that might need some attention and care? How would you describe them?

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PART THREE

WORKING WITH CHALLENGING EMOTIONS
CHAPTER 9
BOUNDARIES WITH ANGER

1. Where do you fall on the too far/too close scale given in this chapter? Based on what you read in this chapter and the previous ones, do you think you might benefit from taking a You-Turn with your anger?
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2. Why is it counterproductive to label yourself or someone else “an angry person”?
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3. Would you most associate anger with a manager, a firefighter, or an exile? How would anger function for each of these types of parts?

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4. What are the five benefits of anger listed in this chapter? Have you experienced any of these benefits in your life or seen them at work in someone else’s? Can you think of other possible benefits?

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5. According to the chapter, what are the six kinds of danger anger poses to a person whose Spirit-led self is not taking the lead? Can you think of any others?

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6. According to the chapter, what are four things that the angry parts of your soul might need from your Spirit-led self? Can you think of others?
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7. According to the chapter, what four things do the angry parts of you fear? Can you think of others?
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8. What two directions can anger toward others take? Which direction does your own anger tend to take most often? What possible actions can you take instead?
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9. How does anger toward self develop into an inner critic? In what ways can this manager drag you down? What role can it take instead, when you befriend and integrate it into your life?
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10. What forms can rebellion against God or anger toward God take? What false beliefs drive this form of anger?
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11. What are two stories from the Bible that teach that God can help us develop healthy boundaries with our anger?
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CHAPTER 10
BOUNDARIES WITH FEAR AND ANXIETY

1. “It takes fear to have courage.” What does this mean to you? Do you believe it? Why or why not?
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2. Where do you fall on the too far/too close scale given in this chapter? Based on what you read in this chapter and the previous ones, do you think you might benefit from taking a You-Turn with your fear and anxiety?
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3. What, according to this chapter, is the difference between fear and anxiety?

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4. According to the chapter, what are seven benefits your anxious parts can bring to your life? Have you experienced any of these benefits or seen them at work someone else’s life? Can you think of any others?

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5. What are ten dangers of extreme anxiety in a person whose Spirit-led self is not taking the lead? Can you think of any others?

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6. What four things do anxious parts of your soul need from you? Can you think of others?

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7. What six concerns of anxious parts of your soul might need to be addressed in order to keep them within healthy boundaries? Can you think of others?

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8. What three categories of anxious parts does this chapter describe?

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9. How does worry act as a manager or controller? What is it trying to manage or control?
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10. What exile does people-pleasing activity commonly mask? How can you tell when your people-pleasing efforts are out of control?
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11. What fear does spiritual doubt usually protect? How, according to this chapter, can doubt be a positive thing?
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CHAPTER 11
BOUNDARIES WITH SADNESS

1. “You need your pain. Grief makes you real, and discomfort makes you resilient.” Have you experienced these principles in your own life or seen them at work in the life of someone else? Explain. Do you think it’s always true that grief and sadness make you better? What makes the difference?

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2. Where do you fall on the too far/too close scale given in this chapter? Based on what you read in this chapter and the previous ones, do you think you might benefit from taking a You-Turn with your pain, grief, or sadness?

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3. What are five benefits that the sad parts of your soul can contribute to your life when treated as allies? Have you experienced any of these benefits in your life or seen them at work in the lives of others? Can you think of any others?

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4. What are five dangers of sadness in a person whose Spirit-led self is not taking the lead?
Can you think of any others?
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5. What three things do the sad parts of your soul need from you? Can you think of others?
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6. What four things might the sad parts of your soul fear about letting your Spirit-led self lead? Can you think of others?
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7. What is the difference between moving on and moving forward? Which is healthier?
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8. What three general causes of sadness are listed in this chapter?
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9. Have you ever experienced sadness or grief in response to leaving behind something bad
or broken in your life? Do you think this sadness is harder to deal with than loss
of something good?
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10. Why do you think it's especially hard to lose a dream or a “what may have been”?

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11. Try reading one of the following Psalms of lament aloud: 6, 13, 44, 130, 142. Notice how they work—with honest (sometimes brutally honest) expressions of grief, fear, and sadness that gradually move toward an expression of trust or hope. Could you work through some of your own sadness by writing your own psalm of lament?

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CHAPTER 12
BOUNDARIES WITH ENVY AND DESIRE

1. Have you ever thought of envy as anything but a negative emotion? According to this chapter, how can it help protect you and even help you become your best self?
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2. Where do you fall on the too far/too close scale given in this chapter? Based on what you read in this chapter and the previous ones, do you think you might benefit from taking a You-Turn when you experience envy and desire?
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3. What are five benefits your envy can contribute to your life when treated as an ally? Have you experienced any of these benefits in your life or seen them at work in the lives of others? Can you think of any others?

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4. What are six dangers of envy in a person whose Spirit-led self is not taking the lead? Can you think of any others?

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5. What three things do your envious parts need from you? Can you think of others?

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6. What four things might your envy fear about letting your Spirit-led self lead?  
Can you think of others?

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7. What is the difference between envy and jealousy? Are both equally harmful?

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8. How can a sense of entitlement get in the way of Spirit-led self-leadership and having healthy internal boundaries? Is there any way in which you notice yourself having an entitlement mentality?

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9. What underlying emotions or needs does envy usually act to protect? In what ways can these emotions be a double-edged sword? Why do we often try to cover them up?
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10. What would it mean to befriend your envy and desire?
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11. “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.” What does this powerful quote from C.S. Lewis say to you? Do you think it might apply to your life? Why or why not?
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1. According to this chapter, from what three sources does our burden of shame arise? Does your own experience confirm this teaching? How?

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2. On which side of the line shown in the chapter do you tend to live your life—self-condemnation or self-acceptance? Explain why you think so.

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3. How does the “Understanding Shame” section define shame? How do you think that shame is different from the other feelings explored in this book?

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4. What are five benefits that the feeling of shame can contribute to your life? Have you experienced any of these benefits in your life or seen them at work in the lives of others? Can you think of any other benefits?

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5. What are five dangers of unaddressed shame? Can you think of any others?

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6. What are five things that parts of your soul carrying shame need from you? Can you think of others?

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7. What are four reasons that the parts of your soul carrying unaddressed shame may resist letting your Spirit-led self take the lead? Can you think of others?

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8. According to this chapter, what three protector parts of your soul typically get involved in the shame game? How do these parts conspire with external shaming messages and lead to the burden of shame in your life?

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9. How do you experience the feeling-burden of shame in your life? In what physical ways does it manifest?
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10. According to this chapter, what is the difference between shame and guilt? What good work does guilt do when kept at a comfortable distance? What are the dangers of guilt that comes too close or stays too far away?
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11. How does shame affect your relationships with others, your creativity, and your general sense of health? Can you try now to counteract these effects of shame by retelling your story in the light of the biblical story?
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CHAPTER 14
BOUNDARIES WITH CHALLENGING PARTS OF OTHERS

1. How can becoming a “parts detective” help you help others without being overwhelmed by their problems?

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2. In what five ways can developing healthy internal boundaries help us establish healthy external boundaries?

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3. What are four typical responses to hearing someone share a need or frustration?
Which ways do you tend to employ most often? What is a fifth alternative we offer when we let our Spirit-led self respond?

4. This chapter suggests a number of tips for responding constructively to friends and loved ones who are struggling. Which of these have you found helpful in the past? Which would you like to try?
5. What are some ways that taking a You-Turn can help you respond to and resolve conflict in your life?
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6. In what ways can learning to take a You-Turn help you develop healthy and appropriate expectations for yourself and others and cope effectively with people (including you) who are less than perfect?
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7. Why is it important to incorporate both emotion (feeling) and cognition (thinking) in the process of caring for yourself and others? How do recent discoveries in brain science undergird this suggestion?
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8. How can your Spirit-led self protect you when dealing with someone whose issues threaten an already wounded part of your soul? What strategies do the authors recommend? Can you think of others?

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9. Try the forgiveness exercise at the end of the chapter. Did you find it helpful? How does the process of extending forgiveness help with the process of taking a You-Turn and setting internal boundaries?

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10. Drawing on insights from this chapter and the book as a whole, write out a prayer asking for grace as you proceed with the process of establishing internal boundaries and addressing hurting or overwhelming parts of your soul. Don’t be afraid to share your honest fears and even complaints with the Lord, but close with thanksgiving for the gifts of love and redemption.

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