

Endorsements

Vibrantly written and chock-full of nuggets of wisdom, *Incredible Life Makeover* helps you find your way out of a painful life situation. Julie's insightful and interactive approach provides you with step-by-step helps that guide you like a roadmap. Fresh and inspiring—you'll find yourself dog-eared the pages for future reference! It will become a book you'll want to gift to someone you love. Enjoy!

—Mark Hendrickson,
Dwelling Place Ministries
Author of *Supernatural Provision*, Kansas City, MO

Julie gives profound analogies and articulate prayers by expounding on the truth Jesus spoke of in the Lord's Prayer along with examples of the healthy thoughts and actions of a person who is free from the curse of an unforgiving heart. She rightly identifies forgiveness as an act of our will and a process through which we gain peace and true joy in our lives. I wholeheartedly endorse *Incredible Life Makeover*.

—Sara Renner, Songwriter & Recording Artist
Co-composer of Song "Forgive," Minneapolis, MN

What you hold in your hands is more than a book. You are holding Julie's life. It has been said the best books are a revelation of the who the author is, their truest self, and more like holding a human in written form . . . well, this written labor is exactly that! Julie has risked being completely vulnerable with her readers in order to call them into their destiny and healing. Every author lives with the pleasure and terror of being "real" and thus, making their written projects something more like their baby than simply a binding of pages. I wholeheartedly recommend *Incredible Life Makeover* to

the hurting and the hungry. Prepare for YOUR life to experience a supernatural makeover!

—Pastor Randy Dean
Living Word Chapel,
Author of *Radiance*, Glenwood City, WI

I thought freedom from drugs and alcohol would change me into the complete person I had never been previously. But my identity as a “sober person” felt incomplete and often left me emotionally exhausted. *Incredible Life Makeover* showed me how to take control of my thoughts and emotions instead of letting them control me. I have learned a new level of freedom by rejecting fear, putting my emotions in the caboose, and learning to see myself as God sees me, instead of being concerned about how others see me. I have discovered my true identity!

—Heather C.
Eau Claire, WI

I have watched Julie’s transformation over two decades as she grew through the storms of life as described in the *Incredible Life Makeover*. Her wisdom and biblical strategies provide a rock solid plan to be prayerfully worked through one concept at a time. God wants the same freedom for you that Julie has experienced. Are you ready for your incredible life makeover?

—Lynn Dehnke
Author of *Meditate and Declare*, Eau Claire, WI

It has been a great pleasure to partner with Julie, in Kenya and in the United States, to share the good news of God’s love and grace and to rescue people from life’s distressing situations. I have been moved by her passion to see lives changed, healed and restored.

Her gift of teaching reaches children and adults. My wife and I are so happy to know her and call her friend.

—Bishop Francis Macharia
House of Hope, Nairobi, Kenya

Do you need a restart? Wherever you are at with your walk with God, Julie encourages and leads you step-by-step into a closer relationship with Him. *Incredible Life Makeover* benefits women and men; it is for teenagers and adults of any age. I grew so much through applying her advice. When you complete one phase of transformation, read the book again to gain more knowledge and new skills to complete the next phase.

—Andrea L.,
Chippewa Falls, WI

Incredible LIFE MAKEOVER



Step-by-Step Transformation to Wholeness

Incredible
LIFE MAKEOVER

Step-by-Step Transformation to Wholeness

JULIE COURT


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PREFACE



I would like to dedicate this book to my three children, their spouses, and my granddaughter, Jaiden. It has been my privilege and great delight to be a mother and grandmother. I am so proud to see you building your lives and families. Spending time with all of you is my greatest joy. As I watch you mature, I can't help but reflect on our journey and how much you have taught me. I love you and look forward to building a legacy together.

In order to help as many people as possible, I have shared tender details about what happened during my childhood. I am thankful our family has overcome our painful past, shared many wonderful times, and continues to celebrate milestones together. I would like to express my gratitude to my mom, dad and his wife, sister and her family, and my brother and his family; you have all blessed me beyond words by your faithful commitment to family.

I hope *Incredible Life Makeover* clearly and concisely communicates the knowledge I have gained during my life transitions to aid in the recovery of those who are hurting.

Bringing this book to life took the help and support of many people. I would like to thank my editor, Monica Miller, for her

technical expertise, spiritual input, and overall guidance. I am especially appreciative of the time spent reviewing the manuscript for content and readability by my friends: Chris, Heather, Cheryl, and Lynn. I also wish to convey my gratitude to my graphic designer, Leila Wilson, for designing the book cover, which is a work of art. I would also like to acknowledge my contacts at the Western Wisconsin Christian Writer's Guild, whose efforts helped me sharpen my writing skills.

My life has been enriched by the teaching of God's Word through multiple churches and ministries. A special thank you to my extended family of fellow believers in my home church in Eau Claire, WI; I could not have completed this project without you. Thank you for continuing to believe in me during my ultimate test and holding me accountable to my calling and destiny. I am grateful for the love and kindness of so many friends: Andrea, Bonnie, Jenni, Katie, Robin, Tracy, Kelli, Brenda, Sue, Kari, Rusty, Karen and everyone else too numerous to mention.

Regardless of why or what caused our particular situation, when we need to begin again, we can put the puzzle pieces back together with God's help. Through a step-by-step transformation, we can enjoy living in freedom.

I hope you enjoy the *Incredible Life Makeover*. May it speed you along in your journey toward healing and wholeness.

PART I

SEVEN PHASES OF TRANSFORMATION

PHASE 1

THE DOOR TO TRANSFORMATION



“I just want to be normal. Why can't I be happy like everyone else?” rolled around in my thirteen-year-old head as the TV droned on. The smiling faces mocked me. Slinking further into the drab green fabric of the couch, I tried to drown out desperate thoughts about what would happen if he found us again. My child-like hope clashed against my gnawing fear. As the hours dragged by, anxiety clawed at my insides. Frantic thoughts consumed me. *“Is this all I have to look forward to? It can't be; I'm barely surviving.”*

Hope died as I heard a fist punch the door. My stepfather's voice pierced the darkness. “I know you are in there. Open the door!” With despair closing in around me, my childhood dream of being anything I wanted was sucked into a murky abyss. I trembled as fear reigned; panic rampaged my thoughts. *Oh no! He found us. Not again. I can't breathe.* More banging filled the air. *Please God, not again.* My nightmare was to be repeated as we opened the door and horror stepped in.



The *Incredible Life Makeover* tells the story of how God takes broken lives and makes them whole. Many years ago, I was that young girl. It was a terrible day during a disturbing period of my life. But with God's help, I eventually experienced my first transformation. As a result of other distressing transitions sprinkled throughout my journey, I have been through a few more makeovers. Being guided by the Holy Spirit, I came out victorious.

God's ways surpassed all of my plans.¹ Doing life His way brought His protection, provision, and promotion into my life. While I have known pain, loss and heartache, I am happy and enjoying my journey.

If you or a loved one are being crushed by a painful life situation, the *Incredible Life Makeover* is a roadmap to help you rebuild one or more areas of your life. Even if it doesn't look like it right now, God loves you and has a great plan for your life. The seven phases described in the *Incredible Life Makeover* can help you move from brokenness to wholeness. You may find the biblical strategies in one of the phases are just what you are looking for. For those in a more serious situation, you may need to work through all seven. If I can do it after having my life touched by alcoholism, mental abuse, codependence, career changes, unemployment, the threat of bankruptcy and divorce, you can too!

What will our lives look like after our makeover is complete? We will:

- Wake in the morning knowing we are deeply loved and valued
- Trade the spirit of heaviness for hope and healing
- Face the day's opportunities and struggles with relentless courage
- Make decisions based on time-tested eternal principles
- Enjoy living with vision to fulfill our purpose

Too many people choose to go through life miserable, drugged up, and comfortably numb. They plod mechanically along like robots, enduring each day. Countless people suffer with debilitating depression. Thoughts of, *No one cares. Go ahead and do it. Kill yourself*, pummel them. The afflicted spend hours running from demeaning thoughts of, *You are worthless and always will be*. The hurting cringe as they hear taunting accusations like, *Failure! You are just like your father!* After hearing these vile voices, the torment drives the afflicted to unleash harm on themselves or others.

When will it stop? The rivers of soul-wrenching pain stop when the right actions are taken to silence the voices.

Do you (or does someone close to you) escape from the intense pressure and pace of life with excessive food, alcohol, or drugs? Do you evade reality by continually watching television, playing video games, shopping excessively, or using addictive substances? Do you wander from one relationship to the next? Do you wish you knew how to change? Are you looking for help?

I can relate.

Before finding the courage to change, my own anger, soul pain, and bitterness hung over my life like a burial garment. The decay oozed out onto everything I touched. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't ignore the negativity I carried. My attempts to break free were futile until I finally found the source of true goodness, which empowered me to break out of my cycle of destruction. Here is a peek into my story and how I discovered the doorway to transformation.

The Dark Days

The drums of divorce beat over and over in my ten-year-old mind. *I can't believe it. It must be my fault my parents are splitting up. If only I had behaved, maybe this wouldn't be happening.*

After my mother announced, “Your father is leaving,” the back steps of our farmhouse became my personal courtroom. I jumped back and forth from self-condemnation to self-pity and back again.

I didn’t understand how this could have happened. I had experienced many uplifting, joyful times with my parents, along with the downs that came with weekends of heavy drinking and family time couched in codependence. As a child growing up, my parents had dropped me off at church because I wanted to hear more about God. Even though I could sense the tension in our home, I never expected the *D* word.

Like Humpty Dumpty, I was not sure anyone could put my life back together again. I felt lost and unwanted as my father moved out and began binge drinking.

My existence descended from miserable to wretched when my mother married an abuser on the rebound. Our knight in shining armor proved to be physically and mentally abusive. After finding his personal stash of pornography, I was even more revolted by him. Feeling trapped in the abusive terror, I began to withdraw and prayed for deliverance.

One night my mother secretly fled with my siblings and me and tried to hide. Over and over I prayed under my breath, “God, please don’t let him find us!” I despaired when he tracked us down and dragged us back. Regardless of my heart’s cry, we left and returned back to the torture many times. Each time the trauma resumed, my trust in God withered a little more, until I didn’t believe He cared at all. I thought, *If He lets this happen over and over, what kind of God is He?*

One day during a car ride, my stepfather ran his hand along the top of the seat and rested it suggestively on my shoulder. My stomach turned because of some of the things I knew but never uttered. I turned in disgust and warned him, “If you ever touch

me, I'll slit your throat." Previously I had found one of his hunting knives in the bedroom; I meant every word. Hatred festered in my heart.

One night the situation degraded into him terrorizing my mother with a gun and firing a shot through the ceiling. I watched her faint and fall to the floor. My mother was transported by ambulance to the hospital while having a nervous breakdown. As I witnessed the trauma, I lost all hope.

Instinctively, I knew I had to save myself. As my mother lay in a hospital bed, I issued an ultimatum, "Let me go live with Grandma and Grandpa, or I will become a prostitute! I am not living one more day with that maniac!"

These were the words of a desperate teenager expecting to be on the run. I couldn't stay to protect her. I left with my grandparents—severely damaged, but alive.

Throughout the next year, I hid in the comfort of my grandparents' stable home, ate rice pudding, and slid safely into bed. Their gentle love covered my woundedness. The soothing atmosphere eased my emotional trauma and calmed my terror so I could sleep.

I feared a loveless future. I didn't think anyone would ever want me so I focused on excelling in high school to prepare for a lucrative career in computers. I mistakenly thought if I was totally self-sufficient, I could keep other people from disappointing me.

I felt rejected and insecure. I maneuvered through school days with a protective cloak, petrified to let anyone in. I didn't want anyone to know what I had lived through. I needed to hide myself; I needed to hide my shame.

Little did I know, a needed course correction was approaching on the horizon. My safe but dark prison would eventually give way through exposure to a powerful alluring light.