

Mike's story

Mike and Lois had been married for just over a decade. Their three kids attended the local church's children's ministry, and for the past two years Mike had been involved in a men's Bible study group. The whole family went to church every Sunday, where Mike served as an usher, and they participated in several serving projects each year.

But recently, Mike's friends at church had noticed a change in him. He had shown up late to church, and a few times didn't come at all for his shift as usher. He had never spoken much in his study group, but now he seemed to almost not be there at all. He sat with arms crossed in front of him, looking off into the distance.

Three months ago, Mike had learned that Lois had a brief affair right after they were married. It had been bothering her throughout their married life, and she decided to tell Mike the truth. He was devastated. Although Lois told him that the affair hadn't lasted long, how could he trust her again? How could he trust anyone?

After his initial anger at Lois, he realized that he was just heart-deep sad. And embarrassed. He could never tell the men at church— his friends— about what had happened. They wouldn't understand. He couldn't imagine ever being willing to bring this up at the group when they went over prayer requests. That would be humiliating. His closest friend, John, would be shocked by what Lois had done, and it might ruin their friendship. No... No one else needed to know.

And yet, this was weighing on his mind, painfully. Everything else paled in comparison, and he couldn't bring himself to engage in conversation about any other topics. Maybe it would be better if he pulled out of the group. Maybe even take some time off from church— it was all just too hard. Eventually, he'd come back to church. Just not right now.

You may have heard the phrase “making mountains out of molehills.” It's a way of expressing the human tendency to let relatively small things loom large in our life. A bad evaluation at work, a fight with your spouse, a teenager's rebellion— these things can become so much of a focus in our minds that we can't seem to think about anything else.

This is intensified when we don't talk with someone about the things that worry or disturb us. When we keep it all inside— when we stuff down the emotions and thoughts— they tend to become even more powerful. And this is even more true when it is a frightening problem, such as a life-threatening illness, job loss, infidelity, addiction.

Although it can be difficult to take that first step, talking with someone about what is happening in your life can be a deeply healing process.

Dr. Burrell Dinkins, retired seminary professor, tells a story about a person who came to speak with him when he was a pastor. She had been carrying a difficult secret around for years, and had finally come to the point where she needed to tell someone.

Weeks after their appointment, the woman walked back into his office. She was smiling as she said, “Thank you for making my mountains into molehills.” Having spoken the secret out loud, she had been able to put it into its proper perspective, and to begin to heal from the pain.

All that said, it is very important to wisely choose the person you talk with about your situation. There are few things more painful than being vulnerable with someone, and then finding your story has been spread around as interesting gossip. So choose someone you know is trustworthy. Someone who loves you— someone you know will listen to you without judging and who will be honest with you. Let that person know that what you're saying is to be kept in confidence. And then... talk. It can make all the difference in your life.