

# Study 2

## Tall Poppies



### Group Discussion

Australians are famous for our “tall poppy syndrome.” We love to bring overly pompous people ‘down a peg or two’! That’s why the first thing sportsmen or award recipients say is “I’m very humbled by this.” But does that mean we Aussies are free from the problem of pride?

What kind of people do you tend to avoid mixing with? Why?

### Read the passage...

We looked at the first few verses of chapter 14 last week, but start again from verse 1, and read through to verse 14.

### Dining with the Enemy

It’s interesting to notice that through his gospel Luke describes eight different meals with Jesus. This is the sixth in the sequence. (For the curious, the others are at 5:29, 7:36, 9:16, 10:39, 11:37, 22:14 and 24:30. Some have suggested the meals make up a thematic structure in the book.) In this instance, it’s interesting that Jesus has been invited to the home of a prominent Pharisee. But it’s not just a friendly social event – verse 1 notes that he’s being carefully watched. The presence of the sick man in verse 2 may not be accidental. It’s quite likely that the Pharisee arranged for him to be there as a trap, to see if Jesus would again heal on a Sabbath. Instead of being intimidated, Jesus goes on the front foot... and is thoroughly confronting!

- a) What tone is set for the dinner party by what we’ve learned in verse 1, and by the summary of verse 6?

b) How embarrassing! From verses 7 to 11, what does Jesus do when he sees the guests pushing for places of honour?

c) Make a special note of verse 11...

*He who \_\_\_\_\_ himself will be \_\_\_\_\_*  
*He who \_\_\_\_\_ himself will be \_\_\_\_\_.*

d) These are words that Jesus will repeat later in Luke's gospel, and are an almost perfect description of the path he intends to take himself.

- From what you know of what lies ahead, how will Jesus humble himself?
- How will Jesus finally be exalted?

How do we seek honour like the Pharisees? Maybe we're a bit more subtle. Perhaps it's in dominating conversation with talk of our own successes. Perhaps it's in dropping subtle hints of our connections or our resources or our abilities. Perhaps it's in making sure we get in first whenever there's a good opportunity. How great the embarrassment will be when God puts you at the other end of the line! Think about some ways you can be more like Jesus in this area of life.

## Master Chef

Social climbers always aspire to mix with the 'best people' and throw the 'best parties.' Look at the practical advice Jesus gives about showing hospitality in verses 12 to 14.

e) How could we, i) as individuals ii) as a group and iii) as a church concretely put these words of Jesus into practice? (You may like to talk to the McClenahan's growth group about opportunities to join in providing meals for the homeless in Fortitude Valley from time to time.)



We often talk about 'entertaining' people in our homes. This is very different to genuine hospitality. When we 'entertain' we seek to impress – everything has to be 'just so', because we want to make the right impression. Instead of being about others, it's about us! Genuine hospitality is for the sake of the guest, and for their benefit

rather than our own. And according to Jesus, throwing lunch for your family and friends is not actually hospitality at all!

### **Some practical pointers**

Make a (private) list of some people you can invite into your home who won't be able to repay you. Do something about it!

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You won't be rewarded by a better invitation back to their place – but you can start looking forward to the reward you'll receive from God!

Here are some more practical ideas...

- Maybe you could take someone to dinner at a restaurant they wouldn't normally go to?
- Or perhaps give 10 percent of your entertainment budget to the Care Team food fund, or put the money towards sponsoring a Compassion child?
- Start networking with the sort of people who won't improve your social standing or provide you with ways to 'get ahead.' Network 'down' instead of 'up'.

Remember what Jesus said:- "When you put on a party, don't just invite your friends or your family or your rich neighbors; if you do, they'll just invite you back and so you'll be repaid. Instead, invite the people who are normally left out, and then you'll be really blessed. Although they can't repay you, you'll be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

### **A Banquet Parable**

Imagine you were at the dinner party with Jesus. It must have been an incredibly awkward moment when he so bluntly criticized both the host and his status-seeking guests. Perhaps to try to fill the awkward silence, when Jesus mentioned "the resurrection of the righteous," someone at the table blurted out "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God." (v15) It's one of those pious things you might say without even thinking about it. Jesus makes the situation even more awkward by telling a very pointed parable about another banquet.

### **Read verses 15-24**

- a) What do you see as the point of the parable in the context of the Pharisee's home?
- b) Who (again in context) are the **invited guests** Jesus refers to?
- c) What sort of things are keeping them from attending the banquet?
- d) From verses 21 and 23, what is does Jesus say is going to happen?
- e) Look back to 13:29. While the impressive, rich and 'clean' Pharisees and teachers of the law, the 'ideal and impressive Israelites' think they are guaranteed a place at the table, the reality is far different. The party is far more **inclusive** than they think... and yet at the same time very **exclusive** as well.

Who's in?

Who's out?

- f) The words of verse 24 are very severe. How do you think they would have been taken at the Pharisee's dinner party?

### **Excusing Yourself From the Party?**

Maybe we've lost sight of the fact that we (as gentiles, or 'non-Jews') weren't on the main invitation list to God's party. For a reminder of this, read Ephesians 2:11-13.

How tragic, then, if we make the same mistakes all over again... too busy making money, too busy working or socializing to take up God's offer of salvation.

- What's stopping you from being an effective part of God's kingdom?
- How can the choices we make and the things we prioritise now affect our eternal destination?

**Pray together as a group for right priorities, for humility, and for opportunities to serve.**