

Fourteen, by Alice Gerstenberg

Mrs. Pringle is hosting a dinner party of fourteen guests, but because of the terrible blizzard outside, and circumstances beyond her control, her guests telephone her one by one, canceling their engagement with her. As she scrambles to fill her dinner seats by calling other friends she knows, other guests call and cancel their call to cancel. Confusion goes back and forth, fluctuating the guest count from 14, to 8, to 16, and back again, until Mrs. Pringle nearly goes mad.

Part of the reason Mrs. Pringle is so frustrated has to do with the fact that her dining room table looks best with fourteen seats, as well as allows her husband to sit at the head of the table, which in her mind is the most honorable place to sit at dinner. But more precisely, she is so concerned with the aesthetic value of the party, because she wants to impress the guest of honor, Oliver Farnsworth, who she hopes will one day marry her daughter Elaine. In Mrs. Pringle's mind, if she herself does not impress Mr. Farnsworth, Elaine will have no hope of capturing his attention, because she is so shy and not at all fussy, which traits Mrs. Pringle does not consider admirable.

Mrs. Pringle would have done well to trust in God's providence, understanding that all things will work out for those who love God. Providence does smile upon Mrs. Pringle in the end, and circumstances better than she could ever have imagined come to fruition, even though she never acknowledges where the blessing came from. Much of her anxiety could have been spared if she accepted the frustrating providences as they came, instead of arguing and getting angry about things that went wrong outside of her control.

NKJV Philipians 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Luke 12: 25, 28, 30b, 31 "And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. Your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you."