

Noah's DOVE

in Genesis 8:8-12 **was** / is ...

"He also sent out from himself **a dove**, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground. But **the dove** found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent **the dove** out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. So he waited yet another seven days and sent out **the dove**, which did not return again to him anymore." (*Genesis 8:8-12*)

an ideal
bird to send out

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

**

careful
rather than bold

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

**

encouraging
Noah with the leaf

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

exploring
an unknown world

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

free to
go and do as she wished

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

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helping
Noah decide what to do

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

important as
a probing-measuring device

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

Descriptive



Meditation

instinctively
interested in plants

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

like the
spies sent to Jericho

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

looking for
dry land, food, & shelter

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

sent out three times

more helpful
than the raven (8:7)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

providentially
guided by the Lord (8:11)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

quick to
return the first time

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

slow to
return the second time

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

unable to
swim like a duck, etc.

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

unnecessary
in a way ultimately (8:15-19)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

Directions: after reading through **Genesis 8:1-19** and some website articles on doves, consider and discuss the way the dove that Noah sent out is described above. **Do you agree with the points made? Would you change or add to them in any way? At the end, discuss the most important descriptive phrases and make applications.** In this, think about why Noah chose a dove and sent it out multiple times. Was this good to do even though God himself would decided when it was time to leave the ark (8:15-19)? Is Noah's approach a pattern for us to follow when making decisions involving unknown factors? — © 2022 by Jon F. Mahar, Hakusan City, Japan and Alexander, Maine, U.S.A.

Why did Noah send out birds?

He was trying to determine if the ground had dried up enough near the ark to be safe for people and the animals. He knew that the tops of the mountains were above water (8:5), but without removing the top covering of the ark (8:13) he was unable to see much. He had sent out a raven as a probe, but by not returning the raven only showed that the earth was safe for ravens.

Was the dove chosen because it was cautious?

The dove and the raven were like space probes sent to an unexplored planet, but the dove was much more helpful. Its cautious nature made it a better instrument for measuring livability, and its instinctive interest in plants did as well. Apparently it explored for an entire day the second time since it did not return until evening (8:10-11). Despite finding plant life that day, it decided that returning to the familiar ark at night was the safer thing to do. Only on its third outing did it decide that it was safe to remain outside (8:12). Like Noah, the dove was cautious.

Why else was the dove a good choice?

A dove is very different from an eagle which could have easily flown far away to the distant mountain, as well as from a duck and other seabirds which would have happily floated and rested on the water. Doves and pigeons also have good homing instincts. So the dove would naturally have been more likely to return than various other birds. Noah was probably well aware of all these things and had probably learned from an earlier mistake with the raven.

Was Noah a model researcher?

Yes, perhaps he was. So there are basic principles for research to be learned from his use of the dove just as there are basic principles of education to be learned from Adam's naming the animals.

Why did the dove bring back an olive leaf?

It may have involved nesting instinct or natural interest in fruit bearing trees. On the other hand, the dove was undoubtedly providentially guided to do as it did since the olive leaf was informative and encouraging to Noah (8:11). There is no contradiction between the dove being free to go wherever it wished and God providentially leading it to do as it did.

Was the probing actually necessary?

Soon afterward, the Lord directly commanded Noah to open the ark and let out all the animals (8:15-19). So the repeated probing with the dove was unnecessary in an absolute sense. Yet, it was not wrong to do it. God expects people to do research.

What is the application?

Like Noah, we should be actively interested in our surroundings and use God-given wisdom and tools to investigate things that impact our lives, rather than just "waiting upon the Lord." For sure, God has a plan, but he wants us to be actively involved in such, including through investigating factors that are unknown but knowable.