

ON THE WINGS OF A DOVE

Cast: Six people who will all sit among the congregation/audience. Depending on the numbers present, you may need to organise microphones or the actors may need to speak up very loudly (even to the point of shouting) so that everyone can hear. Hopefully, there will be some laughter at points in the dialogue, so they may need to wait for it to subside before continuing, or even to repeat the opening few words of their lines, if they were not heard.

The play is designed to be used to introduce or illustrate a sermon or talk about topics such as Christian love, unity, tolerance, understanding of Scripture, or even the second coming or the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but it could stand alone as a presentation in its own right.

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MC—the preacher for the day if possible—appears on stage, puts a picture of a dove on the screen and begins, Good morning/evening everyone. Delighted to see you here today. Now, I have a question for you. 'What does this picture of a dove suggest to you?'

#1 stands up before anyone else can say anything, walks forward and mounts the platform, pointing to the screen and talking as he walks: Oh, that's obvious. A dove symbolises creation! It represents a masterpiece of God's creative design. (Stands there, looking smug.)

#2 calling out and walking up on to the stage: Do you think so? To me a dove symbolises the second coming. Christ will soar through the sky just like a shining white dove and every eye will see him! (Waves hands as he speaks and then stands there nodding head, as an authority figure.)

#3 calling out and walking to the stage: Well, I have to say that I see it differently. To me a dove speaks of the Holy Spirit coming down upon us, just like he did when Jesus was anointed with the Spirit. (Stands beckoning to the audience for support.)

#4 walking to the stage, speaking with exaggerated dramatic effect: What about Christian freedom? As it wings its way through the skies without any hindrance or bondage, unfettered by the sordid things of earth, a dove is a beautiful symbol of glorious Christian freedom. (Looks upwards, hands lifted high, and sweeps around the stage like a bird.)

#5 calling out and walking to the stage: Come on everyone, a dove is a symbol of hope. After the Flood it was the dove that brought promise for the future. Everyone knows that. (Stands casually as if this proves the point beyond question and the case is closed.)

#6 walking on to the stage and shouting loudly: No way! A pigeon is a universal sign of peace. This image is a reminder that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. (Walks up and down with both fists clenched like a sportsperson who has just scored.)

By now all are lined up on stage looking at the screen and pointing and mouthing words as if to try to prove their point. As soon as #6 arrives they all turn around and face the congregation as #1 says to the rest: Look, as much as I respect you all, I have to say you really must have your brains in your boots. Good exegesis always starts at the beginning. In this case, creation! If they let heretics like you into our church I'm going to complain

to _____ (insert name of senior pastor or equivalent) and tell him what I think...

#2: Interrupting before #1 gets to the words 'and tell him...': What would you know? Just because you've been to Bible College you think you know everything [*OR depending on who takes the role of #1*] Anyone would think you had a degree in theology or something. It's as plain as the nose on your face that a dove symbolises the return of Christ. He will return through the skies just like—

#3: interrupting before #2 gets to the words 'the skies...': Don't you people read your Bible? You must spend all your time watching TV. When the Spirit fell on Jesus he came in the form of a dove. There is absolutely no doubt about that. If you can't agree, I'm not staying here. I'm off to _____ (insert name of another church) where at least they believe the Bible. Think about that!

#4: Interrupting before #3 gets to the words 'Think about...': Freedom! That's what it means. A dove is free to sweep across the skies. Not earthbound like us. (*#4 waves arms in sweeping motion*). Can't you just see it now? Gloriously free, gliding wherever it likes through the heavens. It means freedom to read the Bible for ourselves; freedom to believe for ourselves; freedom to follow our own conscience. Obviously, this is the correct interpretation. If you think you are free to think differently you have another think coming.

#5 interrupting before #4 gets to the words 'another think...': I used to think you were all an intelligent lot. Now I'm not so sure. If you would only use your brains you would see that from the very first mention in the Bible, the dove has symbolised hope. If you can't see that you can forget about me being part of _____ (insert name of relevant group) any more. For crying out loud, you lot are hopeless—

#6 interrupting before #5 begins the words 'can't you...' and shaking finger at all the rest: Look, you morons, the whole world knows a dove represents peace. And I'm willing to fight anyone to prove it!

Everyone now begins to shout at the others repeating what they said before in their own words, shaking fingers, waving arms etc... They walk off stage still arguing.

MC: The Bible says, So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

1 I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Philippians 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:1-3, 31-32

(Looks at the people. Dramatic pause.) I'm sorry. Did I just say something wrong?

PRAYER