The meaning behind
The Twelve Days of Christmas
Thank you!

I hope you enjoy this mini unit study on the meaning behind “The Twelve Days of Christmas”.

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What are the Twelve Days of Christmas?

Many people believe that the Twelve Days of Christmas is nothing more than a song about the days leading up to Christmas Day. But in truth, the real timing of The Twelve Days of Christmas takes place after Christmas.

The Twelve Days of Christmas begin on Christmas day December 25th, and end on eve of The Epiphany, or Three Kings Day (or Day of the Magi) on January 5th. In many cultures Three Kings Day (January 6th) is celebrated much like Christmas Day is, but we’ll get to that later.

In the United States the traditions of Twelve Days of Christmas has been forgotten due to traditions such as Santa Clause, the popularity of New Year’s Eve, and the commercial calendar.

**Meaning behind each day:**

The beginning of each verse starts with “my true love gave to me”. “My true love” is a reference to God and the “me” in that verse is in reference to anyone who was baptized.

**December 25th Day 1:** The partridge in a pear tree represents Jesus

**December 26th Day 2:** The two turtledoves represent the Old Testament and the New Testament

**December 27th Day 3:** The three French hens symbolize faith, hope, and love

**December 28th Day 4:** The four calling birds represent the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

**December 29th Day 5:** The five golden rings represent the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Hebrew Torah or the Pentateuch. (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)

**December 30th Day 6:** The six geese a-laying represent the six days of creation

**December 31st Day 7:** The seven swans a-swimming represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (prophesy, serving, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leading, mercy/compassion. Romans 12:6-8)
January 1st Day 8: The eight maids a-milking represent the eight Beatitudes (Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Matthew 5:3-10)

January 2nd Day 9: The ladies dancing represent the nine fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23)

January 3rd Day 10: The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments

January 4th Day 11: The eleven pipers piping represent the eleven faithful Apostles (Simon whom He named Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. Luke 6:14-16)

January 5th Day 12: The twelve drummers drumming symbolize the twelve points of the Apostles Creed

    1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
    2. And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:
    3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:
    4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:
    5. The third day he rose again from the dead:
    6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:
    7. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:
    8. I believe in the Holy Ghost:
    9. I believe in the holy Catholic Church: the communion of saints:
    10. The forgiveness of sins:
    11. The resurrection of the body:

Why go through all that trouble to create symbolism behind a song? This song dates back the 1700’s, a time of severe religious persecution. The twelve Days of Christmas was written as a catechism song that could be sung without fear of persecution or arrest.
In many parts of the world, the eve of the 12th night of Christmas marks an evening of celebration, much like Christmas eve, followed by more celebration on January 6th.

The Epiphany or Three Kings Day is the celebration of the visit of the Magi to the Baby Jesus. Countries that celebrate this give gifts on Three Kings Day, much like we exchange gifts on Christmas Day here in the United States. The night before children go out and gather grass into show boxes so that the Magi’s camels will have something to eat when they arrive.

Here are two videos of Three Kings Day celebrations:

Three Kings Day Celebration at Disneyland Park
Three Kings Day Celebration
Twelve Days of Christmas song
Some cute crafts to go along with the song
Numbers and shapes flash cards to go along with the song
More numbers printables to go along with the song

For more information about The Twelve Days of Christmas, check out Wikipedia.
A partridge in a pear tree
Two turtledoves
Three French hens
Four calling birds
Five golden rings
Six geese a - laying
Seven swans a - swimming
Eight maids a - milking
Nine ladies dancing
Ten lords a-leaping
Eleven pipers piping
Twelve drummers drumming