

The 12 Days of Christmas
#5: Four Calling Birds, Five Golden Rings

Overall objective: to learn about God while singing a silly, fun Christmas song

Objective: basic OT and NT orientation – the first books of each

Step 1: Introduction

We're having fun with a song called "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Some people say that it was written to teach about the Christian faith. Other people say, no, it was just a child's memory-game song. We are using it as a memory-game for the Bible.

Step 2: Sing

So let's sing our song. (sing the whole thing through the 6th day)

Step 3: Review

Let's review what this means. Who is the partridge? (Jesus.) Yes. The partridge will die to save her babies, and Jesus died to save all who believe.

What are the turtledoves? (the two parts of the Bible. The Old and the New Testaments) The Old Testament was finished 400 years before Jesus was born. The New Testament was written after Jesus went back to heaven.

And the three French hens? (the Trinity)

Step 4: Five Golden Rings

Today we're going to talk about the fourth and fifth day of Christmas. **What is the gift on the fourth day?** (give time.) Four calling birds. Birds again. What are they calling?

How about the fifth day? (wait) Five golden rings. Hmmm, no birds.

What could this mean? Any ideas?

Well, let's go back to the two turtledoves. The Old Testament and the New Testament. The first five books of the Old Testament were all written by one man, Moses. Jews call these five books the "Torah." Let's look at these five books.

Solicit the name of each book. Then tell what is in the book.

Genesis – *sou-se-ki* – The beginnings Read Genesis 1:1 In the beginning . . .

Exodus – *shutsu-i-jip-to-ki* – Israel in Egypt as slaves. The story of Moses. Israel being freed from slavery in Egypt. Exodus contains both history and law. Look at Exodus 2 – hopefully there will be a paragraph title that mentions the birth of Moses.

Leviticus – *re-bi-ki* – Mostly laws. Look at Lev 1 – a few paragraph titles.

Numbers – *min-suu-ki* – more history, more law. The first 9 chapters are the counting, then you have more history and law. You might look at Numbers 13 chapter title – about the spies.

Deuteronomy – *shin-mei-ki* – Moses’ final speeches before he died. Look at Deut 34, chapter title will hopefully mention the death of Moses.

So these are the five golden rings. Gold is very precious, and these books are the very precious and important beginning of God’s word.

Step 5: Four Calling Birds

Let’s talk about the four calling birds. The five golden rings were the first five books of the Old Testament. The four calling birds are the first *four* books of the New Testament. We call these four books “the gospels.”

Turn to the New Testament. What are the names of the first four books?
(solicit and write on the board)

Each of these books is the story of Jesus’ life and teachings. We can learn so much about Jesus from these four books. Last week we read the story of Jesus’ baptism in the book of Mark. Matthew and John also tell that story. Luke does not.

Let’s look at the story in Matthew, Mark and John. (look briefly at Matt 3: 13-17, Mark 1:9-11 and John 1:32-34. You might not have a lot of time, allow them to skim, maybe just point out the Spirit descending like a dove.)

Step 6: Wrapping up

So why are they “calling birds”? Because they are calling people to believe in Jesus!

Step 7: Any questions or comments?

Note: For higher level classes or if you really have lots of time

“Calling birds” were originally “colly birds.” “Colly” meant “coal black” so these were blackbirds, crows or ravens.

Also, another interpretation of the “five golden rings” is that they were ring-necked pheasants, which then gives you 7 days of increasingly large birds.