



## Easter: The Inside Story

By Deborah Wassenberg

*Here's a well-used lesson. The real meaning of Easter hidden in eggs for the children to uncover. It's very 'egg-citing' to be chosen to open an egg! Make sure the child chosen to open Egg 12 (which is empty) is an older child who understands the significance and will not be disappointed. It is, of course, the most important egg in the carton but some little ones think they have missed out. Different aspects of the Easter story can be used. The items I chose were for Grade 5 and 6 boys. Your choice will depend on what you want to highlight, the age of the children you are teaching, and whether it's at church or in a school. But the ending is always the same: The tomb is empty...He is Risen!*

### Suggested Songs:

- Hosanna – Praise Team Harvest
- Happy Day (with lyrics) - Fee
- Kids Easter Medley (My Saviour Lives, Let God Arise, My Redeemer Lives)

### Memory Verse: Matthew 28:6

'He is not here for He is risen as He said...'

*Character: Penny Pryer, investigative reporter. Dressed as a TV news reporter holding a microphone, addressing the children as if she is looking down the camera at them, the TV audience.*

*Write each word of the Memory Verse and the Scripture reference onto a small piece of paper. Fold them up and put inside plastic eggs (12 in all). Hide the eggs and Penny will enlist children to help her find them.*

**Penny:** **(On Air)** It's Easter. A giant bunny is roaming the world leaving eggs everywhere he goes. Eggs made of milk, white and dark chocolate. Eggs filled with caramel, sugar eggs, even plastic eggs filled with lollies or toys. How does a rabbit produce so many eggs? This reporter knows *he* does not lay them! Bunnies do not lay eggs. So, what is going on? What is the conspiracy? What is being hidden from citizens? I'm Penny Pryer, investigative reporter, and I'm not afraid to uncover the truth!

**(Off Air)** An anonymous tipoff was sent into my network. I was told I would find the real meaning of Easter hidden in this very room. An attempt to throw me off

the story of the century? Or a well-meaning member of the public afraid to come forward? I, Penny Pryer, am going to find out.

*Penny Pryer asks children to help her find whatever it is she's searching for. The children will quickly realise it's the eggs. They collect all the eggs and give them to her.*

**Penny:** Wait! What is going on here? Is this it?  
My breaking news story is about a dozen eggs?  
I think not! There is more to these eggs than meets the eye.  
What's that?  
There's something inside each egg?  
There is a story here after all.  
Help me uncover the truth.

*Penny asks the children to break open the eggs to reveal the words, and with their help, puts the verse in the right order. They read it aloud together.*

**Penny:** This Memory Verse just gives me more questions.  
**Who** is it talking about?  
**What** do they mean risen?  
**When** did this 'rising' take place?  
**Where** is *He* if *He* is not here?  
**Why** did He rise and from what?  
One thing is for certain, I was right!  
There is more to Easter than Easter Eggs!  
I knew it!  
Listen up, I'm going to hang around here for a bit, okay?  
I've got surveillance in place and I'll be watching everything from my  
TV van parked outside.  
This story is about to break wide open!

## Bible Lesson: The Easter Story

### Bible References:

Matthew 26 -28; Mark 15 & 16; Luke 22-24; John 17-20

### Visual Aid Preparation:

- Purchase plastic eggs and number 1 to 12
- Decide on which symbols you will place inside (this will determine what you highlight in the Easter Story)

- Make or purchase the symbols
- Decorate a shoe box or egg carton (depending on the size of eggs you have found) for safe storage as you will be able to use this resource for many years
- You can accompany the eggs with flashcards or an Easter story book



## Story:

### **Egg 1: Donkey**

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.' Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owner asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They replied, 'The Lord needs it.' They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

'Hosanna in the highest!'

Throwing cloaks and the branches of the trees was like a red carpet being put out for someone important today. It showed respect.

### **Egg 2: Silver Coin**

The religious leaders hated Jesus. He exposed their corrupt hearts. The people loved Jesus. He taught them about God and healed them. The chief priests were jealous and wanted Jesus dead. Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' twelve disciples offered to betray Jesus. 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?' The chief priests counted out 30 pieces of silver. From that time on Judas looked for an opportunity to betray Jesus. Jesus knew what Judas was doing but did not stop him.

### **Egg 3: The Jug of Wine (Communion)**

Jesus asked His disciples to prepare a very special meal that has become known as 'The Last Supper.' It was the last meal that Jesus ate before he died. Jesus raised the bread and prayed over it. He then gave the bread a new and special meaning, saying that it would represent His body. He then took up the cup and also gave it a new and special meaning. Jesus said that the wine represented His blood that would be shed when He died, so that people could be forgiven of their sins against God. He also said that the symbols were not only to remind His followers that He had to die, but that He would also come back to earth one day. This meal is still very important to all Christians who use Communion to remember that Jesus died for our sins and that one day He will return.

### **Egg 4: Flowers (The Garden of Gethsemane)**

Jesus knew that he would soon die, and so went to pray in the garden. He left three disciples, Peter, James and John, telling them to sit and pray for him, while he prayed in one corner of the garden. Jesus asked God if it was possible, that he might not have to die, but that he would do what God wanted even if it meant dying. Jesus was so upset that he actually began to sweat blood. (It is a medical fact that people can sweat blood when they are under extreme pressure.) After Jesus prayed, he went to see the three disciples, but they had fallen asleep. He told them to wake up and stay awake. Jesus prayed again on his own and when he had finished, he again found the three asleep, but this time he did not wake them but went and prayed alone again. After Jesus had prayed for a third time, he went and woke the disciples and again told them to keep watch, but this time it was because Jesus knew that Judas was coming to betray him.

### **Egg 5: Rooster**

During the Last Supper, Jesus predicted that Peter would deny ever knowing Him. Peter told Jesus, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' Jesus said, 'This very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.'

### **Egg 6: Sword**

With Judas leading the way, and with Caiaphas' chief steward called Malchus, following with a couple of priests, the Roman soldiers came to the Garden. Judas went ahead of the group to identify Jesus. It was common for Jewish men to greet each other with a gentle hug and kiss. But Judas used the greeting to betray Jesus. As the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. Jesus told Peter off explaining that if he wanted he could easily get out of the situation, but he was willing to accept what must happen. Jesus then healed Malchus' ear. This was his last miracle before his death, helping someone who wanted to kill him! Jesus was then lead away to the house of Caiaphas. Peter and John followed at a distance and James went off to tell Jesus' family that he had been arrested. Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. 'You also were with Jesus of Galilee.' Peter denied it. Another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This man was with

Jesus of Nazareth.' Peter swore, and said, 'I don't know the man!' After a while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, 'Surely, you are one of Jesus' followers, your accent gives you away.' Peter denied knowing Jesus again. Immediately a rooster crowed. Peter remembered what Jesus had said and he went outside and wept bitterly.

### **Egg 7: Whip**

Before Jesus was crucified He was whipped. It was a painful and terrible ordeal. Jesus was treated so evilly by the people He had come to save. The torment He endured was prophesied in Isaiah: 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5). The 'stripes' referred to in this prophecy are a direct reference to the lashes of the whip Jesus received. Jesus' terrible wounds shows how much He loves us.

### **Egg 8: Dice**

After Jesus was nailed on the Cross, the Roman soldiers divided up his clothing into four groups. But they saw his coat was not made by patches of cloth sewn together, but seamless, a quality garment that took a lot of time to make. So they threw dice (or cast lots) to see who should get to keep it.

### **Egg 9: The Cross**

Prisoners were made to carry the cross-piece of their own cross which was tied across their shoulders. Jesus had not eaten, drank, or slept since being arrested the previous evening and had been beaten many times. It was not surprising he was so weak that he collapsed under the weight of his cross. However, he did not collapse until he reached the city wall. The Romans would not have wanted him to die before he was executed, so they pulled a man called Simon of Cyrene from the watching crowd to carry the cross. The procession carried on through the outskirts of Jerusalem until it came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'the skull' because it is a rocky out-crop that looked like a skull). When the procession reached Golgotha, the soldiers would have first put the uprights of the crosses into the ground. These would have been about two metres high, just high enough that the prisoners feet would not touch the ground. The cross pieces were then laid on the ground and the prisoners were re-tied to them with arms extended, so that the plank went across the shoulder blades, and were tied on at the elbows. Large iron nails were then driven through each hand nailing the prisoner on the cross piece. The cross-piece was then connected to a rope and pulley and pulled up onto the upright, guided by soldiers using ladders. The cross-pieces were then nailed and/or tied onto the upright. A small rough wooden seat was put onto the upright to help support some of the prisoner's weight. Lastly, the prisoner's feet were nailed to the upright, either individually or sometimes a huge nail was used that went through both feet, one on top of the other. Once prisoners were in the crucifix position, they could sometimes take days to die. They either died of exhaustion or more commonly they drowned when their lungs filled up with body fluids and blood. Because Jesus was the main prisoner to be executed, his cross was placed in the

centre, and probably the highest of the three crosses with each criminal on either side of him. The sign with the crimes of Jesus written on it that had been carried in the procession was then nailed to the very top of the upright. It said 'The King of the Jews'. The Jewish Priests called out in very sarcastic jeers, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' Jesus prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' The sky stayed black from noon until 3.00pm. The darkness would have not only been in the sky, but also in Jesus' heart as he experienced all the sin, pain and death, past, present and future that ever existed on earth. At about this time Jesus died. He cried out 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' After this Jesus spoke his words: 'It is finished' meaning his work on earth, and 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' This is a quote from Psalm 31:5 meaning that Jesus gave up his will and life fully to God, trusting in him, even into death. The words were yelled as in triumph at the end of a battle, not whispered in defeat.

### **Egg 10: Bandage**

Then Joseph of Arimathea who was a Jewish council member and a secret friend of Jesus came to ask the Romans for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a rich land owner and had a tomb ready for a burial nearby. It was probably where he was going to be buried, but he was willing to give it up for Jesus. The tomb would have been a large cave with two body shaped niches carved into the side walls. Joseph and another council member called Nichodemus (who had also got to know Jesus quite well) took the body of Jesus to the tomb and quickly embalmed the body. Mary and the other women would have also gone to the tomb, but would have only watched this initial embalming. They planned to come back on the Sunday morning, just after sunrise, to embalm the body properly. The quick embalming consisted of wrapping the body in bandages, like a mummy. The bandages would have been soaked in Myrrh as it has a strong but pleasant smell and covered up the smell of a dead body. (Myrrh was one of the gifts given to the baby Jesus by the Wise Men in the Christmas Story.)

### **Egg 11: The Stone**

Jesus' body was placed in the niche and a very large stone was rolled in front of the tomb entrance. At the request of the Jewish leaders, the Romans put a guard of the best and most highly trained soldiers on the tomb to make sure no one could steal the body. The disciples then left to mourn and await the sunrise on Sunday, when they could go back to the tomb and embalm the body properly. Three days after Jesus had died, early on Sunday morning (just after sunrise), some of the women that had followed Jesus made their way to the tomb. The women included Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of Jesus and Joanna, the wife of a Roman official. The women arrived at the tomb and saw that the tomb was empty and that the huge stone covering the entrance had been rolled away from the entrance. Suddenly two angels appeared to the women and told them that Jesus was alive and had risen from the dead. The women would have been amazed and very probably frightened and so ran off to tell the disciples what had happened.

## **Egg 12: (Empty!)**

The disciples didn't believe the women. So wondering what had really happened, Peter and John set off to the tomb. As soon as Peter arrived he dived into the tomb to see what had happened. John followed Peter into the tomb and found it empty with the linen strips that would have been wound round Jesus neatly folded. The head covering was at one end of the ledge and the other bandages at the feet end. Peter and John had no idea what had happened and so went off back to the other disciples to confirm that at least the bit about the body being missing was true. During the next 40 days, Jesus appeared to his followers. Five hundred people saw him! On the 40th day he took them out to the town of Bethany and Jesus was taken up to Heaven to live with God. Before Jesus left the earth, he made a promise to his followers that he would send another helper, just like himself, that would be with Jesus' followers from then on, until Jesus returns to Earth at the end of time to reign forever as King. Jesus had told his followers not to leave Jerusalem as the helper would come and meet them there. So they were all sitting in a room and suddenly the Holy Spirit (sometimes called the Holy Ghost) came and went inside them. This was helper Jesus had talked about. Christians believe that everyone who truly follows Jesus, has the Holy Spirit within them who helps them to live a life more like Jesus. The disciples then went out into the streets of Jerusalem and for the first time, they started to tell people about Jesus. People from many different nations were still in Jerusalem and through the Holy Spirit each of them heard the disciples speak to them in their own language! Some people accused the disciples of being drunk! But then Peter (who had denied knowing Jesus) came to the front and preached the first Christian sermon. Peter told the people the story of Jesus and that he is the only way to God. About 3000 people became Christians that day!

## Ministry to the Children:

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the dead is the greatest event that ever happened in history! It's so much more than Easter eggs. The inside story, the true story of Easter, is that Jesus, even though He had never done anything wrong, took our sin on Himself. Sin brings death. The Bible tells us that in the book of Romans Chapter 6 verse 23. 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' If we sin we die. And we all sin. Except Jesus. Jesus never sinned. That's why He conquered death and God raised Him up. Because of Jesus paying the price for us we can ask Him to forgive us. We will be forgiven of every sin past, present and future! And when one day we die, death will have no hold on us either. We will go to live with Jesus in Heaven! If you've never heard the inside story of Easter before, if you have never given your life to Jesus, today can be your day! *Altar Call.*

*Penny returns and talks to the Leaders and children.*

**Penny:** I listened to everything in my TV van.  
That's the greatest story I've ever heard!  
What a scoop!  
The world is distracted by eggs and bunnies and chocolate  
when all along The Inside Story is all about Jesus.  
What Good News!  
I've got to get back out there and expose the conspiracy.  
Will you help me?  
Will you spread the Good News about Jesus, too?  
**Wait till the world hears this!**

## Optional Activity: Wordless Bracelet

*Give the children a way to share the Good News by providing them with a Wordless Bracelet, which they will make themselves. You'll find instructions on 'How To Make Salvation Bracelets' on YouTube.*

## Game: In the Tomb, Out of the Tomb

Stick a long piece of tape on the floor to divide the playing area. Designate the right side of the line as 'in the tomb' and the other side of the tape as 'out of the tomb'. Stand on the 'out of the tomb' side, and have the children face you while standing in the 'in the tomb' side of the line. When you call out either 'in the tomb' or 'out of the tomb' the children should jump to the side you have called. If they fail to jump at all, or jump to the wrong side, they are out. Make it extra challenging by going faster, and calling out the same side several times before switching. The Leader can make it tricky by pointing to one side while calling out the other. The last child standing wins.

## Morning Tea: Hot Cross Buns

*Ask for volunteers to toast and butter Hot Cross Buns as a special treat. Remember to check for allergies. Toast gluten free bread with an alfoil cross on top. Cut a small cross (not an x) from cardboard and wrap it in the alfoil. Place the toast on the bread and grill. The bread will toast everywhere but where the cross is. It is such a simple thing to do, but it is so exciting for those children who usually miss out.*

## Craft: Stained Glass Cross

*I like Easter Sunday craft to focus on the Cross. You'll find a variety of Stained Glass Cross ideas on the internet (sometimes called sun catchers). The craft does need a bit of preparation, so ask for a team of helpers to cut it all out weeks before, and see if any can volunteer on the day.*