

GIFTS FOR LENT

Help your students celebrate Lent in a special way this season. Give them a gift on a few of the six Sundays in Lent and Easter Sunday. When you give gifts and explain why you are giving them, your students will not only have the joy of receiving a gift, but they will also receive a rich reminder each week of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Be creative in choosing what gifts you will give. Here are some Lenten gift ideas to get you started:

A purple bookmark, with a cross on it, to use in their Bible. Make the bookmark with purple felt or burlap, with a dark cross painted on it. Explain how purple is the color of preparing. We are preparing for Easter. Ask what they can do to prepare for Easter.

A cocoon, with a butterfly inside. A cocoon is a symbol of new life—what looks dry and dead, grows into something beautiful and living. You can make a simple butterfly in any number of ways—with felt, beads, torn paper collage, crocheted, crayon on paper—whatever medium the gift giver chooses! To each butterfly attach a slip of paper printed with 2 Corinthians 5:17b: ". . . everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new." (If desired, make a refrigerator magnet or pin by attaching a small piece of magnet or a safety pin to the back.) To make the cocoon, wrap each butterfly in a small piece of paper bag, twisting and gluing the ends. Attach a note to the cocoon: "Open on Easter."

A cup with soil, along with seeds to plant and instructions for growing. Grass seeds are easy to grow. If you give them grass seeds two or three weeks before Easter, the seeds should be growing on Easter.

A pretzel. The pretzel's history will be of interest to the children. Share with them how church leaders of long ago made their bread during Lent in the shape of praying arms.

A cross made of palm fronds. This is a good gift for Palm Sunday. Take two thin strips of palm fronds, or other long thin plant leaves. Fold the ends of the strips into the middle and staple together into the shape of the cross. Criss-cross ribbon round the middle to hide the staple and give a finished look.

Gifts for Easter. On Easter Sunday, give the children the last gift to finish this series—something celebrative and a sign of new life: a red Easter egg. The Eastern church has traditionally given red eggs on Easter as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice. When exchanging eggs, the Christians gently tap the eggs together, one person saying, "Christ is risen!" and the other responding, "Indeed, He is risen!" Before dyeing the eggs red, use a white crayon to mark a Christian symbol, like a cross or fish, on each egg.