

LESSON 3 THE CRUCIFIXION

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Showed His Love by Dying for Us

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus is crucified on a cross to defeat sin and fix the relationship between people and God. His sacrifice demonstrates His amazing love for us!

WORD OF WONDER: Jesus makes us new. —from 2 Corinthians 5:17

CURIOSITY 15–20 minutes

Hands-on activities to spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God

- Play Stations:
 - Play Dough Crosses and Hearts
 - Love Sensory Bag
 - The Crucifixion Coloring Sheet
- Curiosity Activity: Love in Action
- Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions
- Declaring God's Wonder



BELIEF 20 minutes

An interactive dive into Scripture that guides kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder

- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God's Big Story: The Crucifixion
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Word of Wonder: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

FAITH 15–20 minutes

An intentional conversation that helps kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own

- Circle Time: Heart Questions
- Craft: Cross Collage
- Game: Find the Heart

IDENTITY 15–20 minutes

An interactive worship response activity that creates space for God to remind kids that they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder

- Responding in Worship: Jesus Loves Me!
- Prayer and Blessing
- Closing Game: Jesus Loves Me Freeze Dance

Wonder@Home™

Designed for families to engage in the wonder of God together at home. This resource includes a video, worship playlists, activities, and more!



LESSON 3 FOR LEADERS

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

Have you ever been wrongfully accused? Perhaps someone spread false gossip about you, or maybe someone took something you said out of context.

When living in a fallen world of nearly eight billion imperfect humans, we're bound to face difficult things and difficult people. It's easy to develop a jaded view of humanity. And no one understands the imperfection of humans better than God, yet still He loves us.

Take some time to read Matthew 27:32–56.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose to die such an excruciating death? He had every right to show His power and put humans in their rightful place. Yet He chose to submit himself, facing the humiliation of being put on trial. Even the earthly authorities couldn't find anything illegal or evil about Him. He was innocent, yet His love for us is so great that He chose to die on the cross. Jesus showed His love by dying for us.

Does knowing what Jesus did for us give you the strength to face the evil in the world? Take some time to dwell in God's wonderful love. May it inspire you to show grace to those who might not deserve it but need it.

—Catherine Hwang-Jin

Children's Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

The climax (and turning point) of God's big story is the death and resurrection of Jesus, God's Son. Jesus became nothing and took on the nature of a servant, humbling Himself to death on a cross (Philippians 2:6–8).

WHAT?

Crucifixion was a horrible and painful process—a form of slow torture as the recipient suffocated to death. Jesus willingly went to the cross, submitting Himself to “the joy set before Him” as He endured the cross, so we could be restored to right relationship with God (Hebrews 12:2 NIV).

WHERE?

The crucifixion of Jesus took place outside the city gates of Jerusalem on a hill called Golgotha. Jesus would have been exposed up on that hill as He suffered. Jews from all over would have been in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

WHEN?

It is no coincidence that Jesus died at Passover—the time when all of God's people remembered God's salvation in the Exodus. Jesus died as a sacrificial lamb, ushering in a new and better exodus event: freedom from our slavery to sin and death.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY:

Jesus died to fix the relationship between God and people, making the way for us to be with God. Jesus fulfills the promise God made after the first sin in Genesis 3, reversing the curse of sin. Jesus is the only One who can defeat sin and death!



LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Play Stations

SUPPLIES: play dough, play dough tools (rollers, scissors, etc.), cookie cutters (heart- and cross-shaped), resealable plastic bags (gallon-size, 1 per kid), permanent marker, clear hair gel (8 oz. per kid), heart-shaped plastic beads, clear packing tape, coloring utensils, beads or pom-poms (optional), heart-shaped stickers (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Crucifixion Coloring Sheet (1 per kid)

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Play Dough Crosses and Hearts

Set up: Set out play dough, play dough tools, and cookie cutters. You could also add some items like beads or pom-poms to give the kids more with which to create and explore.

Play: Let the kids take turns creating a variety of play dough creations of crosses and hearts.

Play Station: Love Sensory Bag

Set up: Ahead of time, create the sensory bags. On the outside of each resealable plastic bag, draw a cross outline in permanent marker. Then add about eight ounces of clear hair gel and 10–15 heart-shaped plastic beads. Close the bag across the top and seal with clear packing tape.

Play: Encourage the kids to use their fingers to push the heart beads into the cross.

Play Station: Crucifixion Coloring Sheet

Set up: Ahead of time, print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids could also add heart-shaped stickers to their pictures or draw someone they love.

Curiosity Activity: Love in Action

We're going to play a fun guessing game. We're going to act out some things, and you can guess what the actors are acting out.

Invite one or two kids to act out the Love in Action scenarios in the list below. Encourage the other kids to guess what's happening in each scenario that's being acted out. The goal is for the kids to see

situations with people showing love in action.

Whisper the scenarios to one or two kids and help them act out each scenario while the other kids guess.

Use the following scenarios:

- Helping a hurt friend
- Hugs or high fives
- Giving a gift
- Reading a book to someone
- Playing with someone
- Cooking a meal for someone
- Tucking in a child at night
- Taking care of someone who is sick
- Praying with someone

Wow! You did great guessing what we were doing! Now let's think about all those things you guessed. What did those actions show? Allow the kids an opportunity to guess. You may have to remind them of the scenarios as they are guessing. **Love! That's it! All those things that we were doing are ways we show love to someone. Today we're going to hear about a very special way Jesus showed love to us.**

Puppet Intro and Curiosity Questions

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Tac the Cat Picture or puppet

For this section, you can use the cat picture provided, a stuffed animal cat, or a cat hand puppet.

Leader: Remember our friend, Tac? He's here again, and he's curious!

Tac the Cat: Hi, kids! I'm curious today about my grandma, Meow-ma, because I don't know if she loves me. My mom says she loves me ... but does she really?

Leader: Tac, I'm sure your Meow-ma loves you! Doesn't she show you her love by the way she treats you?

Tac the Cat: What do you mean?

Leader: Well, does she call you and spend time with you?

Tac the Cat: Yes, she does. She takes me on cat walks.

Leader: Does she get you things or do things for you?

Tac the Cat: Yes, she does all that! She got me a fun new cat toy last week. And she planned a park play date for the two of us.

Leader: And when you have a problem and go to her for advice, does she help you?

Tac the Cat: She does! She gave me some wonderful advice yesterday.

Leader: It sounds like she shows you that she loves in lots of ways, Tac.

Tac the Cat: You're right. She does love me! And I love her. I need to think of a way to show her.

Leader: It reminds me of the story we're going to hear today. We'll learn about the most amazing way



Jesus showed His love for us! He loves us so much.

Tac the Cat: He does?! That does sound amazing. I bet it's a really good story.

Leader: We'll learn all about it today in God's big story. There are lots of ways to show love. And God is love, so He's the best at it.

Tac the Cat: That's great! Now I'm going to go find my Meow-ma and let her know how much I love her too.

Leader Tip: Be sensitive to the fact that some kids might not have family members who show love like Tac's "Meow-ma" and might feel discouraged. Remind them that God loves them so much.

Have you ever been curious about something? Let's take a moment and think: What do you think the word love means? Allow the kids to respond. **What things have you done to show love and care to someone else?** Allow the kids to respond. **What makes you know you're loved?** Pause for responses. **We'll learn about the most amazing way Jesus showed His love for us.**

Today's Wonder Truth is JESUS SHOWED HIS LOVE BY DYING FOR US. Today, we'll discover how Jesus showed His love for us by dying for us.

Declaring God's Wonder

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Early Childhood Declaration [Video](#) or Slide (optional)

Show the Early Childhood Declaration [Video](#) or Slide and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Thank You, God, that You made me! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Make prayer hands, then point up and then to yourself.

And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Bring your arms down from above, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

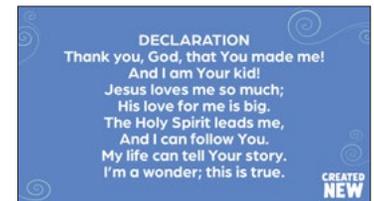
March in place like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. (Kids repeat words and motions.)

Put your hands up, shake your fingers, and celebrate ("praise hands").





Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Guide kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

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SCRIPTURE: Matthew 27

WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for loving us with a big, unchanging, never-ending love! Help us understand how great Your love is for us and help us to hear the truth of Your word today. Thank You most of all for Jesus, who loves us so much He was willing to die for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Worship

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: songs from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Today we'll learn about how much Jesus loves us and how He showed that love by giving His own life for us dying on the cross. Let's sing about Jesus and His incredible love for us!

Play songs from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) and encourage the kids to sing and dance as they praise God.

God's Big Story: The Crucifixion

SUPPLIES: Bible

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Bible Story Picture (optional)

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible, and what do I see? (Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.)

God's big story, waiting for me! (Point to yourself.)

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible.

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found in the book of Matthew.

Read the God's Big Story Script provided or read Matthew 27:32–56 from the Bible. You can also print the Bible Story Picture to give the kids a visual depiction as you tell the story.

GOD'S BIG STORY SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: play dough, small cross, paper heart

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [The Crucifixion God's Big Story Video](#)

Parts of our story today might be sad. Can you show me your sad face? Demonstrate a sad face. **But other parts will be happy. Can you show me your happy face?** Demonstrate a happy face. **As we hear about how Jesus showed His love for us, you can make a sad face when the story makes you sad and a happy face when the story makes you happy.**

Make It Inclusive! This is a very heavy story and may be a lot for preschoolers to handle. Use care in how you share the story to sensitive or emotionally fragile kids, while still telling the truth of what Jesus did. For some kids who are highly emotional, a leader may need to be available to explain or answer questions.

God's plan to fix the relationship with His people started long ago. It was time for it to happen! God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus taught people about God. He helped people. He healed sick people. It was time for Jesus to save people from sin. Sin is anything wrong we think, say, and do. Jesus came to fix everything that sin messed up. But the sad part is: Jesus had to die to do that. Jesus knew it was almost time for Him to die. He prayed in a garden and asked God for help.

Does that make you happy or sad? Can you use the play dough to make a sad or happy face? Invite a kid to come up and shape the dough while you talk. It's OK if the kids aren't sure how to respond or feel at this point.

Jesus knew He was going to die because people do so many wrong and bad things. These wrong things—called sin—keep us apart from God. Is that sad or happy? Pause for responses. **It's OK if the kids aren't sure how to respond or feel. Can one of you shape the dough into a sad or happy face?** Invite another kid to come up and shape the dough while you talk.

One of Jesus' followers was named Judas. But Judas was not faithful to Jesus. Judas worked with some leaders who wanted to stop Jesus. Judas took them to where Jesus was in the garden. The leaders arrested Jesus. But Jesus never did anything wrong. He did not deserve to be arrested or punished. The leaders took Jesus to a judge. The judge said Jesus did not do anything wrong. But the leaders asked the judge to punish Jesus anyway. Jesus was sent to die on a cross. Can someone come hold up the cross? Invite a kid to come up and hold up the small cross.

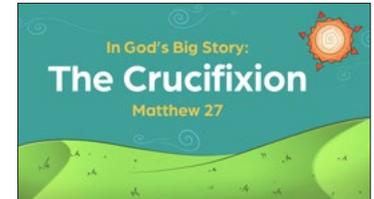
It was a sad way to die. It hurt Jesus. Some people beat Him up. People made fun of Him. They put Jesus on a cross, and He died there. He had power to save Himself, but He did not save Himself. He chose to die so we can be saved. He did not even sin! Jesus died to beat sin.

Show me with your face about how that makes you feel. You can feel sad Jesus died or happy He loves you so much that He rescues you from sin. Whatever you feel is OK! Allow kids time to show their expression and be willing to talk about it if needed.

When Jesus died, it was the middle of the day. But it got very dark. The earth shook. The curtain in the temple (where people worshiped God) tore right in the middle. But this was not the end of the story. Jesus died, but three days later, He would live again!

Can someone come up and hold up the heart? Invite a kid to come up and hold up the paper heart. **It can feel sad, but Jesus' love for us is something to smile and be happy about! Jesus chose to die because it was the only way to beat sin once and for all. Since Jesus died for our sins, we can be forgiven. We can be close with God forever. And He didn't stay dead—the best part of the story is coming next week! We can thank God because Jesus showed His love by dying for us!**

VIEW THE GOD'S BIG STORY VIDEO



Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask the following question to help kids connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is JESUS SHOWED HIS LOVE BY DYING FOR US. Where did you see our Wonder Truth happen in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

Jesus died to fix the relationship between God and people, making the way for us to be with God. A long time ago, when sin came into the world, God promised to one day make it right so people can be saved. Jesus is the answer to that promise! Jesus is the only One who can defeat sin and death!

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bible

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Created New Word of Wonder Slide or [Video](#) (optional)

WORD OF WONDER

Jesus makes us new.

—from 2 Corinthians 5:17

Display the Word of Wonder Slide or [Video](#), if using. **Our Word of Wonder for the Created New series is from 2 Corinthians 5:17. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together.**

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **JESUS**—Point fingers from left hand into right palm, then right hand into left palm (sign language for "Jesus").
- **MAKES US**—Both hands over your heart.
- **NEW.**—Bring both arms out in front of you and down to your sides.
- **FROM 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17**—Hold your hands together as if opening a book.



We're learning about how Jesus makes us new. When we trust Jesus

and follow Him, He makes us new! That means the old part of us that is full of sin and bad choices changes because of Jesus. We have new hearts that are filled with love and His Spirit! Let's play a game to help us remember what Jesus has done for us!

Let's sit in a circle and play a game of Popcorn. One person will pop up and say the first word: Jesus.

Then the person beside that person will pop up and say the next word in the verse: makes. The next person will say the third word: us. The next person will say the last word: new. Then we'll start over! Make sure to pop up like a popcorn kernel popping.

We'll keep going through our verse with each person in the circle saying the next word in our verse.

Repeat the verse as many times as you'd like. To add a little extra challenge and fun, have them do the motions as they say the word.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What did Jesus do for us so we can become new?** (*died on the cross*)
- **What part of us do you think Jesus makes new?** (*our heart; the sinful part*)



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

LESSON 3 EARLY CHILDHOOD

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Showed His Love by Dying for Us

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WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

Circle Time: Heart Questions

SUPPLIES: paper hearts in various colors (at least 1 per kid)

Ahead of time, prepare at least one paper heart for each kid in various colors.

Gather the kids to sit in a circle with the paper hearts in the middle. **In today's God's big story, we learned that Jesus loves us so much that He died on the cross for us. We're going to do an activity to think about how much Jesus loves us. When I say, "Go," everyone will pick up a heart, then I'll call out a color. If you're holding the heart that's the color I say, you'll answer a question.** Say, "Go," and invite all of the kids to pick up a heart, then choose a color. If multiple kids have that color, they can all answer the question (or you can just choose one kid to answer each question).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What did Jesus do first when He was in the garden after the meal with His disciples?** *(He prayed.)*
- **What happened to Jesus in the garden after He prayed?** *(He was arrested.)*
- **Had Jesus done anything wrong?** *(no)*
- **What happened to Jesus, even though He hadn't done anything wrong?** *(He died on a cross.)*
- **Why do you think Jesus was willing to die even though He didn't deserve it?** *(If kids need help, offer ideas such as: Because He loves us; so we can be saved.)*
- **How can you thank Jesus for His love and for dying on the cross?** *(If kids need help, offer ideas such as: praying and telling Him we love Him; telling God, "Thank You.")*
- **How do you feel knowing Jesus loves you so much He chose to die to rescue and forgive you?**

Jesus chose to die on the cross because He loves us and knew that's what it would take for us to be able to know God as a friend and be in His family. Let's take a moment to pray to God and thank Jesus for being willing to die for our sins.

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for loving us and sending Jesus for us. God hears all our prayers!

Craft: Cross Collage

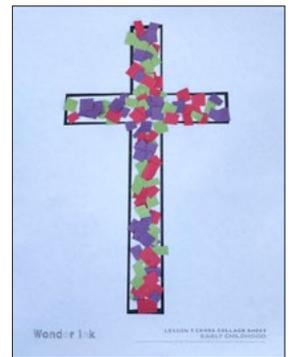
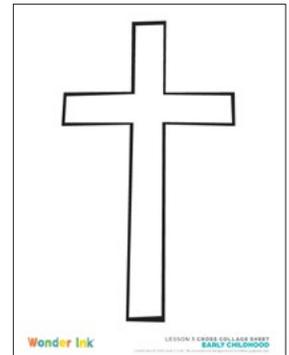
SUPPLIES: heart-shaped stickers or confetti, glue (optional) coloring utensils (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Cross Collage Sheet (1 per kid)

Before the kids arrive, make one copy per kid of the Cross Collage Sheet. Set out heart-shaped stickers or confetti. You may need some glue as well if not using items that are self-adhesive.

In our story today, we learned about how Jesus died on the cross. Why do you think He did that? Allow the kids to answer. **Jesus showed His love for us by dying on the cross. What do hearts make us think of?** Allow kids to answer. **Yes, love!**

We're going to make a cross collage to help us remember that Jesus showed His love on the cross by placing hearts all over our crosses. Encourage the kids to put heart-shaped stickers or confetti on their crosses, then set them aside to dry. You can also let the kids color their pictures with coloring utensils. **You can take your pictures home to remind you of the amazing love Jesus showed when He died so we can be forgiven!**



Game: Find the Heart

SUPPLIES: paper, scissors (prep only)

Ahead of time, prepare one paper heart.

What did Jesus do in today's story to show His love for us? Allow the kids to respond. **That's right—He died on the cross so we can be saved and forgiven for our sins. That was one big way to show how much He loves us! Let's remember His love by looking for the heart. I'll give it to one person, and you'll all pass it around the room while you all walk around. When I say, "Freeze," everyone will sit down on the ground. The person with the heart will quickly sit on the heart before anyone sees, then we'll try to guess who is sitting on the heart.**

Give the paper heart to one kid. Then tell all the kids to walk around the room and pass the heart from kid-to-kid without others noticing. Periodically call out, "Freeze" and encourage all the kids to sit down immediately. The one with the paper heart should discreetly sit on the heart. Then ask the kids to guess who has hidden the heart. When they find it, the kids can shout, "Jesus showed His love by dying for us!" Play several rounds.



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Create space for God to remind kids that they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

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WORD OF WONDER: From 2 Corinthians 5:17

Responding in Worship: Jesus Loves Me!

SUPPLIES: butcher paper or large posterboard (at least 3'), scissors (prep only), tape, paper hearts or heart-shaped sticky notes (1 per kid), coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: music from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Before the kids arrive, make a large paper cross (at least 3 feet tall) using butcher paper or large posterboard. Use tape to attach the cross to the wall at a height the kids can reach. Set out paper hearts or heart-shaped sticky notes for every kid.

If kids are able, have them write their names on heart cutouts. If they're unable to write their own names, write it for them.

Jesus showed us a true love when He died on the cross. We all sin and do things that hurt God. We need to be forgiven. Jesus died so we can have a friendship with God and be forgiven. Jesus died because He loves us so much. You can think about this and go to the cross and place your heart with your name on it, say, "Jesus died for me." You can tell Jesus, "Thank You!"

Call kids up to the cross one at a time. Encourage them to say, "Jesus died for me." Remind them that Jesus loves them. They can tape their hearts on the cross. If they want to, they can use coloring utensils to decorate it and make a praise poster. You can play music from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#).

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for loving us and sending Jesus to die for us.

Let's pray and talk to God.

God, thank You for loving us and sending Jesus. Thank You for forgiving our sins. We love You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: Because of Jesus, your sins are forgiven, and you can have a relationship with God ... forever! May you always remember that Jesus showed His great love by dying for you, and in Him, you are made new!

Closing Game: Jesus Loves Me Freeze Dance

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: “Jesus Loves Me” from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

Play the song “Jesus Loves Me” from the [Created New Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#). Invite the kids to dance as the music plays. Pause the music sporadically throughout the song. When the music stops, each kid must freeze immediately and hold that pose until the music begins again. Play the game as long as the kids are engaged.

Remember, Jesus showed how much He loves us by dying on the cross. This isn’t the end of the story though! We’ll hear the best part in our next lesson!

Leader Tip: You can play the game so that kids are out if they move while the music is paused. If this upsets some kids, the game can be played without removing kids from the game.