



Seventh-day Adventist Church  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

STEWARDSHIP

WHEN WE ARE FAITHFUL,  
BIG THINGS CAN HAPPEN.



# the MYSTERIOUS NOTE



# Teacher Instructions

## Note to Teachers

Building stewardship skills is a key part of students' spiritual development. The following lessons centered around stewardship will help build students' understanding of being faithful to God's call to stewardship while also meeting key content standards. Through these lessons, students will feel empowered as they learn that they can contribute to God's mission in the world.

Care to share? Use #studentstewards to show us how your class is making a difference!

## About *The Mysterious Note*

*The Mysterious Note* is a story about a family from Chicago, a large city in the US state of Illinois, that is completely caught up in a self-serving lifestyle. When the businessman father brings his family on an overnight business trip to a small town in the neighboring state of Michigan, an unexpected turn of events unfolds when he clashes with a store owner who runs his store using biblical principles of stewardship. In the meantime, his mischievous son befriends a couple of local kids and they discover a mysterious note that catapults them into a four-day adventure of mystery and self-discovery.

In this film, Biblical stewardship principles are subtly weaved throughout the story. The principles will help both kids and adults learn to trust God with everything that has been entrusted to them. The film reminds us that when we love and trust God with all we've been entrusted with, our outlook on life changes. Suddenly, we find joy in a simple concept such as generosity. Other concepts taught are how to be content with what we have, and that God will bless and reward those who are faithful to Him with all the important things in their life.

The 90-minute film contains more than 70 instances where a stewardship principle is taught. Of course, the goal is to teach these points without being preachy. This storytelling platform provides a fun and visual representation of what it could look like when you trust God and are faithful to Him no matter what you are faced with in life.

## Watch *The Mysterious Note*

**Goal:** Students will learn about stewardship through story

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* video

**Time:** 90 minutes (may be broken into segments)

### Steps:

1. **Define** stewardship as managing our time, talents, and treasure for God's glory.
2. **Share** that stewardship is important for every Christian believer.
3. **Tell** the class that they are going to watch a movie about children living stewardship.
4. **Show** the movie *The Mysterious Note*
5. **Encourage** students to reflect on how they feel after watching the video, the challenges in being faithful stewards, the reasons for being stewards, and ways they can be a steward.

## Bible Study

**Goal:** Students understand the biblical support of stewardship

**Materials:** Bible

**Time:** 30 minutes (may be broken into segments)

### Steps:

1. **Read** and discuss the following Bible verses related to stewardship:
  - Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15
  - 1 Chronicles 29:14
  - Haggai 1:3-11
  - Malachi 3:8-12
  - Matthew 23:23
  - Romans 15:26, 27
  - 1 Corinthians 9:9-14
  - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:7

## Video clips

To obtain video clips needed for each lesson please email [stewardship@nadadventist.org](mailto:stewardship@nadadventist.org).

## Lesson 1: General Stewardship

**Goal:** Students will learn to define stewardship

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* videos, Bible, Fundamental Belief #21

**Time:** 50-minutes

**Steps:**

### 1. **Show** clip 01-TMN-stewardship.mp4

### 2. **Read**

Stewardship is a pretty big word. Did you notice that at first, Mr. Thomas used the word “manager”? It’s kind of the same thing. Also, Mr. Vargas jokingly mentioned the Steward of Gondor, and Mr. Thomas laughed and said “No,” but in fact, it is a good example. The Steward of Gondor, an imaginary character in a story, takes care of the kingdom while the king is away. The Steward does not own the kingdom, never actually sits on the throne, but is supposed to make only the decisions the king would make if he were there.

That’s the way we can think of the world and everything in it. Who is the Creator, Owner, and Ruler of every single thing? God is! God gives us the job of managing little bits of His kingdom for Him. He wants us to always ask Him what decisions He wants us to make.

By the way, our attitude matters, too. Knowing that God really owns everything, and only asks us to take care of it under His supervision, takes away our worry. Did you notice that Mr. Thomas’ first task for Mr. Vargas was to list and share things he was thankful for? Being thankful makes everything easier.

Did you know Seventh-day Adventists have a writing called Fundamental Belief #21? It tries to list all the things God gives us to care for. It’s written in kind of complicated language, but your teacher has the whole thing written out for kids. See how many things you can find listed in that Belief. Then see how many of those things you care for.

You can be a good steward for Jesus!

### 3. **Discuss** the following questions as a class using the “think, pair, share” method. (Keep in mind that this may be a sensitive issue for some students, so be sure to watch the video in advance and establish respectful discussion guidelines.)

- Now, what do you think stewardship is? Do you have a clearer idea of it than you did before we watched the movie?
- How many things can you remember that Mr. Thomas listed as being things he tried to manage for God?

- In the movie, Mr. Thomas was in danger of losing a business he loved, and all his income. How do you think this made him feel? How was he able to remain positive and kind anyway?
- Can you think of any other things we need to take care of for God?
- List some of the misunderstandings the Vargas family had about stewardship. List some of the things they learned. We will go into these things in more detail through this week.

### 4. **Classroom Activities**

**Look** around the classroom and find items that show how you, me, and the class are trying to manage our time and abilities for God. Discuss what grade you would give to our class. Are there things you think you are doing especially well? Can you think of any suggestions for improvement? If so, make a reminder poster and try to meet your goals.

**Name** a talent that each student in the room has been given by God. How is each one using those talents for God?

**Explore** some of the blessings and resources of the earth that God has given us. How are you and your classmates working to care for God’s earth? Create a poster that you can put in a public place to remind people to care for creation.

### 5. **Stewardship in Action**

**Encourage** students to be faithful stewards by putting stewardship principles into action. Choose one of the three things you liked in the Fundamental Belief #21 and create a project you will do this week to help to take care of that particular aspect of God’s world.

[Have students report back on their projects at the end of the week.]

### 6. **Reflect as a class**

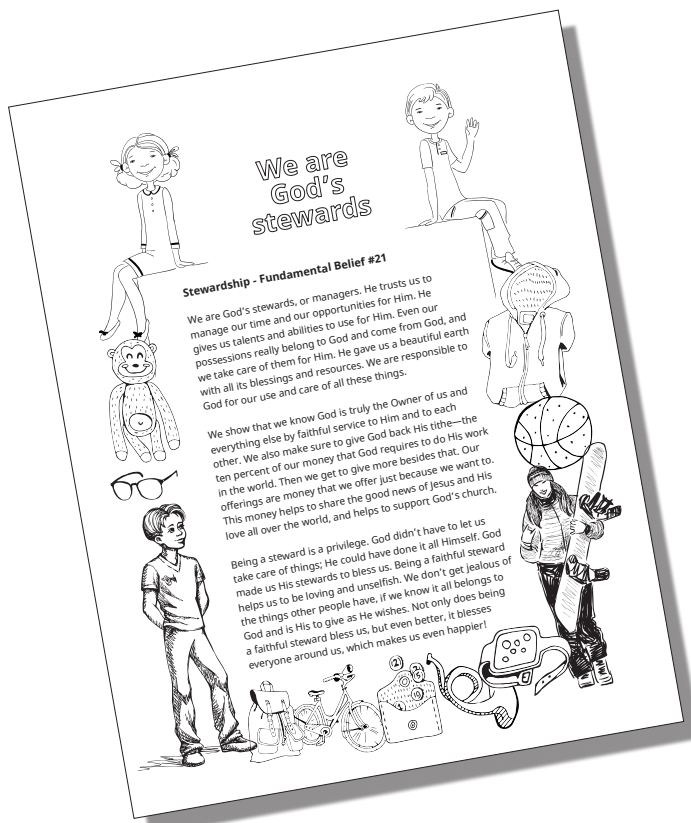
- What surprised you in your research?
- What do the class projects have in common?

## Note to Teachers

Print Fundamental Belief #21 on paper that is good for coloring and distribute to students.

### Stewardship - Fundamental Belief #21

We are God's stewards, or managers. He trusts us to manage our time and our opportunities for Him. He gives us talents and abilities to use for Him. Even our possessions really belong to God and come from God, and we take care of them for Him. He gave us a beautiful earth with all its blessings and resources.\* We are responsible to God for our use and care of all these things. We show that we know God is truly the Owner of us and everything else by faithful service to Him and to each other. We also make sure to give God back His tithe—the ten percent of our money that God requires to do His work in the world. Then we get to give more besides that. Our offerings are money that we offer just because we want to. This money helps to share the good news of Jesus and His love all over the world, and helps to support God's church. Being a steward is a privilege. God didn't have to let us take care of things; He could have done it all Himself. God made us His stewards to bless us. Being a faithful steward helps us to be loving and unselfish. We don't get jealous of the things other people have, if we know it all belongs to God and is His to give as He wishes. Not only does being a faithful steward bless us, but even better, it blesses everyone around us, which makes us even happier!



### Classroom Activities

- Underline as many things as you can find in this belief statement that God wants us to take care of for Him. Compare with your classmates to see if you have the same number. There may be more than one opinion about how many separate things are listed.
- Choose three items on your list that particularly appeal to you. They may be things you already take care of for God or things you would like to learn more about.

\*Depending on the age of the students, you may wish to give further discussion to what the earth's "resources" are.

## Lesson 2: Time and Energy

**Goal:** Students will learn their time belongs to God

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* videos, 24-hour schedule, paper, and pens

**Time:** 50-minutes

**Steps:**

### 1. **Show** clip 02-TMN-time.mp4

### 2. **Read**

God gives us time and energy. The question is: do we manage it wisely?

I'm sure you've noticed that sometimes we feel full of energy, and sometimes we feel tired, or just don't want to do anything. When we feel lively and energetic, we want to do all kinds of things. Sometimes we do silly things, like Josh at the beginning of the story. Sometimes we do too much, and wear ourselves out. You see this more in grown-ups. Mr. Vargas, for instance, used to worry about the way Josh was using his time and energy, but now he's worried about the way *he* is using it.

Other times, when we don't feel very energetic, we may just want to sit, or lie around. Maybe we watch a lot of TV, or play video games. It doesn't make us feel more energetic; it makes us feel even more tired.

As you watch this movie, you can see that there are lots and lots of things God gives us to steward for Him, and taking care of all of them takes time and energy. So, how we measure out our time and energy becomes important to everything else. If you spend all your energy on one thing, even a good thing, other things may suffer.

God made people to need cycles—we sleep part of the time, and work part of the time; we eat at certain times, and digest at certain times; even the Sabbath is an important part of the cycle. It's also true that different people have different levels of energy, so what God asks of one person is not the same as what He asks of another.

When we think of our time and energy as belonging to God and only given to us to manage for Him, it changes our attitude toward what we do and when we do it. Some people think working for God is hard or boring, but you can see in this movie that it can be fun.

You can be a good steward for Jesus, managing your time and energy for Him.

### 3. **Discuss** the following questions as a class using the "think, pair, share" method.

- What did the people in the film do with their time and energy? What

changed from the beginning of the film to the end?

- Early on, Mr. Vargas was upset about how much time Mr. Thomas spent with customers, and especially with him closing early sometimes. What changed his mind about those things?
- Are you a person with high energy or with low energy? What kinds of things affect how energetic you feel?
- What are some of the things we need to do to keep our energy strong and even?
- Do you think there is a difference between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual energy? Do they need different care, and if so, why?
- Are you satisfied with the ways you measure out your time? What are some of the things you use time for?

### 4. **Classroom Activities**

**Create** a schedule to show how your time is used. First, block off the hours you need for sleep, devotional time, eating, personal care, and school. Add in any other things that you do; these may vary from person to person. Now block in the amount of time you need for homework, household chores, and play. If something has to go, which things are the most flexible? What happens if you "steal" time from something important, even if it's to do something else that's also important? Work to help each other balance needs for work, play, rest, and other needs.

**Make** a poster or chart that shows things you can do to help your energy remain strong. Which of the things on your personal schedule add to your energy, and which take away from it? Can you budget your time and energy better? [Note to teacher: You could use a template such as NEWSTART or CREATION Health to help kids have a better idea of what it takes to stay strong and energetic.]

### 4. **Stewardship in Action**

**List** two things you will do to better manage your time and energy this week.

**Name** something you could use time and energy for, that will help someone else. This can be a personal thing you do yourself, or it could be something to do with one or more friends.

[Have students report back on their projects at the end of the week.]

## Note to Teachers

Give each student a copy of the 24-hour schedule. Explain how they can color in the areas for sleep, school, and study etc.

### \_\_\_\_\_ 's 24-Hour Schedule

Sample

I get up at \_\_\_\_\_

I go to bed at \_\_\_\_\_

I sleep for \_\_\_\_\_

My school starts at \_\_\_\_\_

My school ends at \_\_\_\_\_

I am at school for \_\_\_\_\_

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- Determine** how you spend a “typical” 24-hour day. Enter the hours or parts of hours for each activity. The total should be 24 hours! Don’t be discouraged if you have to go back and change time spent on each activity.
- Tell** students that time management involves organizing and planning your time so you can get the most out of your days and accomplish your goals.
- Remember** a few simple tools can help you feel less overwhelmed and ensure that you don’t overlook important tasks. Sometimes a simple “to-do” list is all you need.
- Remember**, the purpose of time management is not to get as much done as possible in the shortest amount of time; rather, it’s to ensure that time is being used wisely so that important tasks are getting the time and attention they need.

Areas to consider when allocating time:

School	Study	Family commitments
Sleep	Personal care/ grooming	Meal prep/ eating/ clean-up
Exercise/sports	Socializing/ entertainment (with friends)	Relaxing/TV/ video games, etc. (alone)
Commute	Chores	Other



### Lesson 3: Relationships

**Goal:** Students will learn how they can be managers of their relationships

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* videos, whiteboard or paper and pens

**Time:** 50-minutes

**Steps:**

**1. Show** clip 03-TMN-relationships.mp4

**2. Read**

God gives us relationships with people to steward for Him.

At the beginning of this movie, Josh and his family were a pretty happy family. They didn't fight, or hurt each other, or anything like that. But they seem to have lived their lives separately. Josh and Jesse each had their own school, their own friends, and their own interests. Mom was busy with the house, and probably had another job. Mr. Vargas was always busy with his work, and didn't spend much time with his family. In fact, just eating supper together was so unusual that he thinks his family will think he's crazy just for suggesting it!

I am sure the Vargas family loved each other, but they didn't seem to know or understand each other very well. They certainly didn't realize that their relationships with each other, with others, even strangers, were given to them by God to be stewarded, or managed, for Him.

Now, they've learned a lot of things, and you can see a whole new family emerging. They might have thought it was crazy to eat together, but they started talking, laughing, and enjoying themselves.

How did they learn these things? Have you realized that the whole movie is about relationships? Mr. Vargas' growing friendship with Mr. Thomas is changing him. Josh's friendship with Cam and Faith is changing him.

And it all started with the most important relationship: Mr. Thomas had already given his whole self and his whole life into God's hands. Here, he has the chance to change the lives of a lot of people, just because he's being a faithful steward.

You can be a good steward for Jesus, managing your relationships for Him.

**3. Discuss** the following questions as a class using the "think, pair, share" method.

- How many different relationships can you name in the movie? What are some of the ways people are caring for those relationships? Are there new relationships being formed that

didn't exist at the beginning?

- There's not much about church in the movie, though it's mentioned a couple of times. How can you tell that Mr. Thomas has a good relationship with God? Do you think others are starting to know God better too?
- What kinds of relationships do you have in your life? What are some of the ways you take care of those relationships?
- Have you ever felt lonely or left out? Have you seen others who look lonely and left out? What can you do about this situation?

**4. Classroom Activities**

**Draw** three circles: a small one in the middle, a bigger circle around that circle, and a third large circle that takes up the whole board or paper. In the center, draw a person. Each student can think of that person as representing himself or herself. The circles represent first the closest, then the not-as-close, and then more casual relationships. As a group, decide what kinds of relationships would go in the inner circle, the middle circle, and the outer circle. What kinds of differences would you see if each one of you made your own paper? For example, one would hope all people have, God, family, and dear friends who live in the center, next to their hearts, but not everybody has that. Why not? Is there anything you can do about that?

**Pair** everybody up with someone they don't know very well for one class period or recess. Work or play with that person. Talk to each other about your life and family, your interests and abilities. As a class discussion, share what you learn from this experience.

**Think** of something specific you can do (as a group or in pairs) for someone you don't know—and do it!

**5. Stewardship in Action**

**List** your relationship circles—close relationships, less-close ones, and more casual ones. Where would you put God?

**Write** three things to do this week: one to care for your relationship with God, one to care for your relationship with someone close to you, and one for someone you don't know well.

## Lesson 4: Talents

**Goal:** Students will learn how they can be managers of their talents

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* videos, paper, and pens

**Time:** 50-minutes

**Steps:**

### 1. **Show** clip 04-TMN-talents.mp4

### 2. **Read**

God gives us talents to steward for Him.

This is one of the best areas to see how much God likes variety. He gives all kinds of different talents and gifts and abilities to different people. He even gives different ones at different times in the life of the same person. You never know what things God might give you a gift for as you grow, especially if you are faithful in the little jobs he gives you now.

We sometimes divide these things into different categories. Abilities are anything you have learned to do. When you were small, you couldn't even count. Now you can add, subtract, multiply, and divide. That ability to learn new things came from God.

Talents, on the other hand, are an inborn extra ability. Some people, for instance, seem to be able to do math without even thinking about it. It's like they have numbers in their brains. If you are one of those people, you can help others to learn, too, if you are patient. Talents come from God, too.

Then there are gifts. Some of these are spiritual gifts, often given when people are older, (though not necessarily) and usually for a particular job God wants the person to do. Perhaps the math genius is later given the spiritual gift of teaching, and becomes a math professor. Perhaps that professor uses that gift to help others understand God's world better and see that there really must be a Creator. Perhaps some people are actually saved in God's kingdom just because someone was a faithful steward of their gifts and talents.

You can be a good steward for Jesus, managing your abilities, talents, and gifts for Him.

### 3. **Discuss** the following questions as a class using the "think, pair, share" method.

- What are some of the talents you can see in Josh?
- Do you remember how he used his talent for technology in the early part of the movie? Do you think that was the kind of activity God had in mind when He gave Josh that gift? How

do you think Josh felt inside about it, even though it was funny?

- In this clip, you can see him turning his ability to good and helpful use instead. How do you think he feels now?
- Why does it matter to God how we take care of our talents? Can you think of ways people have been hurt by misuse of talents and abilities?
- What are some of the ways that care of our talents mixes together with care for our time and energy, and our relationships? Can you see how stewardship is a whole way of life?

### 4. **Classroom Activities**

**Label** three sheets of paper as "Abilities," "Talents," and "Gifts." Write a list of some of the abilities you have learned to use in your life. Then write a list of talents—particular things you are good at. Finally, list some gifts you believe God has given you to use for Him. They may overlap. Now team up in pairs of those who know each other fairly well and trade lists. Does each one agree with the list the other made? Are there more things the other person would add? Sometimes we don't think we are good at something, but others think we are. (And sometimes we think we're good at something and others aren't so sure, but be sure to nurture your relationships and be kind!)

**Choose** one thing for each person to share. You could do a mini talent show, where each person gets one minute to display a talent and share a way that it could be used for God. We may tend to think of things like music and art, but be creative—there are lots of different kinds of talents.

### 5. **Stewardship in Action**

**Choose** one of the gifts or talents you have been given, and list three things you want to do to be a good steward and practice and improve that talent.

**Think** of one specific thing you can do this week for God using that talent.

[Have students report back on their projects at the end of the week.]

### **Reflect as a class:**

- Did you have obstacles that prevented you from being able to practice and improve your talent?
- What are you doing to ensure success in the future?



## Lesson 5: Money

**Goal:** Understand returning tithes and offerings

**Materials:** *The Mysterious Note* videos, tithe envelopes, 10 pennies for each student

**Time:** 50-minutes

**Steps:**

**1. Show** clip: 05-TMN-money.mp4

**2. Read**

God gives us money to steward for Him.

Money is another one of those things that is spread around very unevenly. Most of the reason for that is because people in this world seldom see money as something to manage for God. They do anything they wish with the money they have, and lots of people do everything they can to get more and more and more. Others worry all the time about not having enough.

What if we let go of all that and considered whatever money we have as a gift from God to steward for Him? If we did that, we would remember that even though it all belongs to God, He only requires us to return to Him 10 percent of it. That part is His, period, to take care of His church on earth, so it doesn't even count as giving, just as returning, or giving back.

Just doing that makes something very interesting happen—you find out that 90 percent goes farther than 100 percent used to. But your gratitude to God doesn't stop there. You want to give some of the 90 percent He gave you to manage, too. So you give some offerings to Sabbath School and church. Sometimes you give to someone in need, or send extra money because there was a disaster somewhere.

Sometimes, like Mr. Thomas and the Vargas family, you give flowers just to cheer someone's day. And it cheers your own even more. Money becomes time, and time becomes friendship, and friendship becomes blessing.

You can be a faithful steward for Jesus, managing your money for Him.

**3. Discuss** the following questions as a class using the "think, pair, share" method.

- Most of the time, when people talk about stewardship, money is the first thing we think of. We may talk about tithe and offering. We have left this discussion until last, not because it is last in importance, but because before we can be faithful stewards with the money God lets us manage, we first must give our lives to Him. That way, we are managing our time and energy, our talents and abilities,

our relationships—managing our whole lives God's way. Who do you think learned the most about money in this movie? Why?

- Do you know where the main Bible passage is that teaches us that tithe is not ours, but God's, and we are not giving it to Him but giving it back? [Malachi 3:6–12]
- What were some of the rewards that happened in the movie when people were generous, either with time or energy or money or friendship? Do you think we always are "paid back" in obvious ways? If not, what are the rewards we can always count on?

**4. Classroom Activities**

**Choose** a scribe to write on the board some of the ways you and your families make money or gain goods that you need. Does anybody barter, or raise garden produce and animals? How do you give God the tithe on those?

**Share** with each other ways that you give offerings, either in money or in other ways. Share examples of blessings that came when you were faithful with managing your money.

**Examine** a tithe envelope. Many people like to plan and organize their giving, beyond the 10 percent tithe. What kinds of categories do you find on your church's envelope? Does it give suggested percentages? Do you agree with them? If you have an allowance, figure out how much you would give if you gave to all those categories.

**(Extra credit!)** Let's bring in some smaller children—kindergartners or first-graders—and use pennies to teach them how to count out tithe.

**5. Stewardship in Action**

**Have** a class fund-raiser of some kind, then figure out the tithe and give that to church. Next, decide on what offerings you will give from the money, and to whom. What will you do with what is left? It could be something for the school or class, or it could be all offering—going to some special giving project.

**Individually**, do something similar to raise funds for something you find important. In either case, share what you learn and how you feel when you do these things.

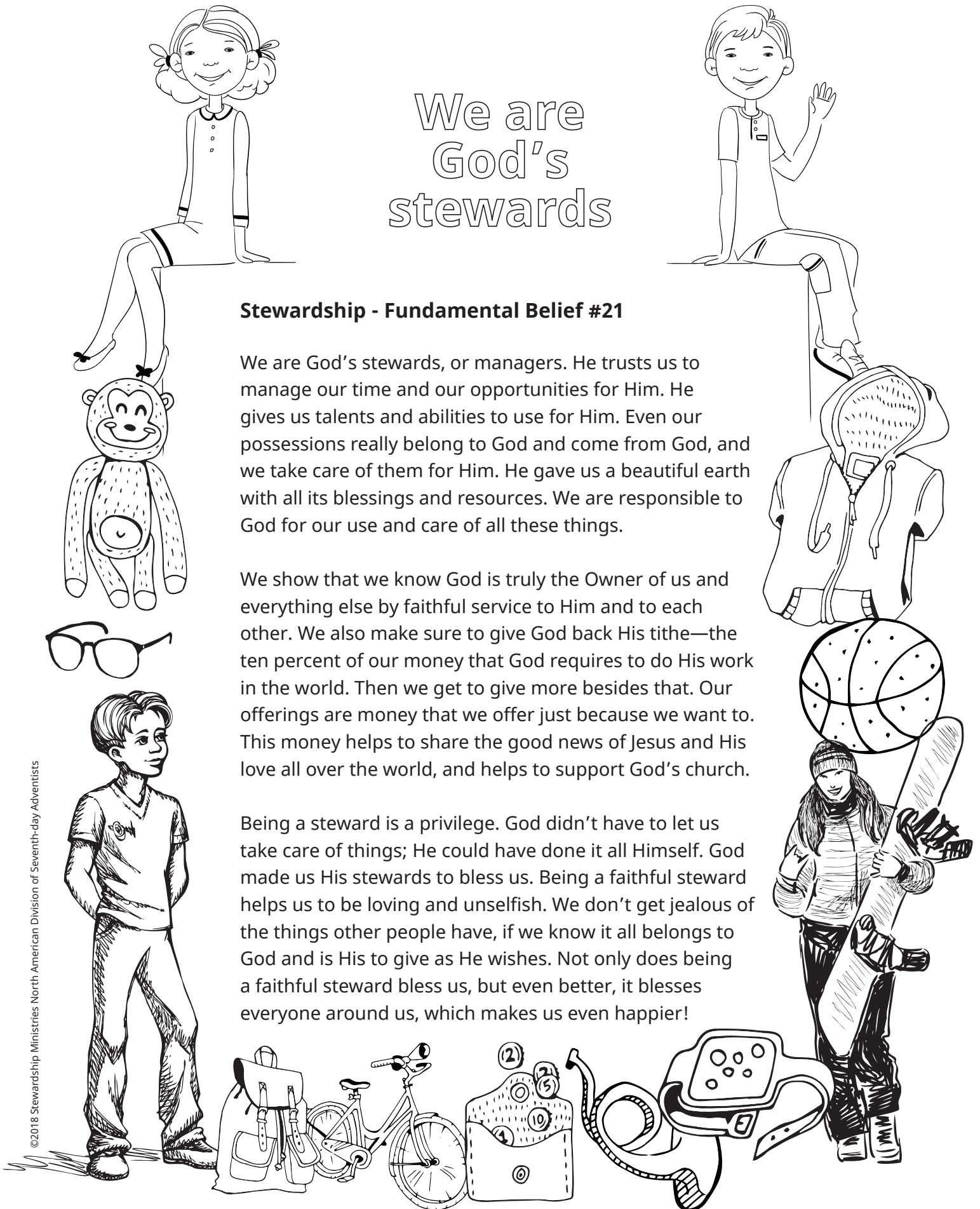
# We are God's stewards

## Stewardship - Fundamental Belief #21

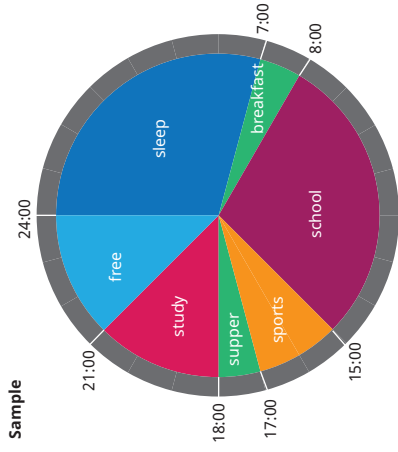
We are God's stewards, or managers. He trusts us to manage our time and our opportunities for Him. He gives us talents and abilities to use for Him. Even our possessions really belong to God and come from God, and we take care of them for Him. He gave us a beautiful earth with all its blessings and resources. We are responsible to God for our use and care of all these things.

We show that we know God is truly the Owner of us and everything else by faithful service to Him and to each other. We also make sure to give God back His tithe—the ten percent of our money that God requires to do His work in the world. Then we get to give more besides that. Our offerings are money that we offer just because we want to. This money helps to share the good news of Jesus and His love all over the world, and helps to support God's church.

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# \_\_\_\_\_ 's 24-Hour Schedule



I get up at \_\_\_\_\_

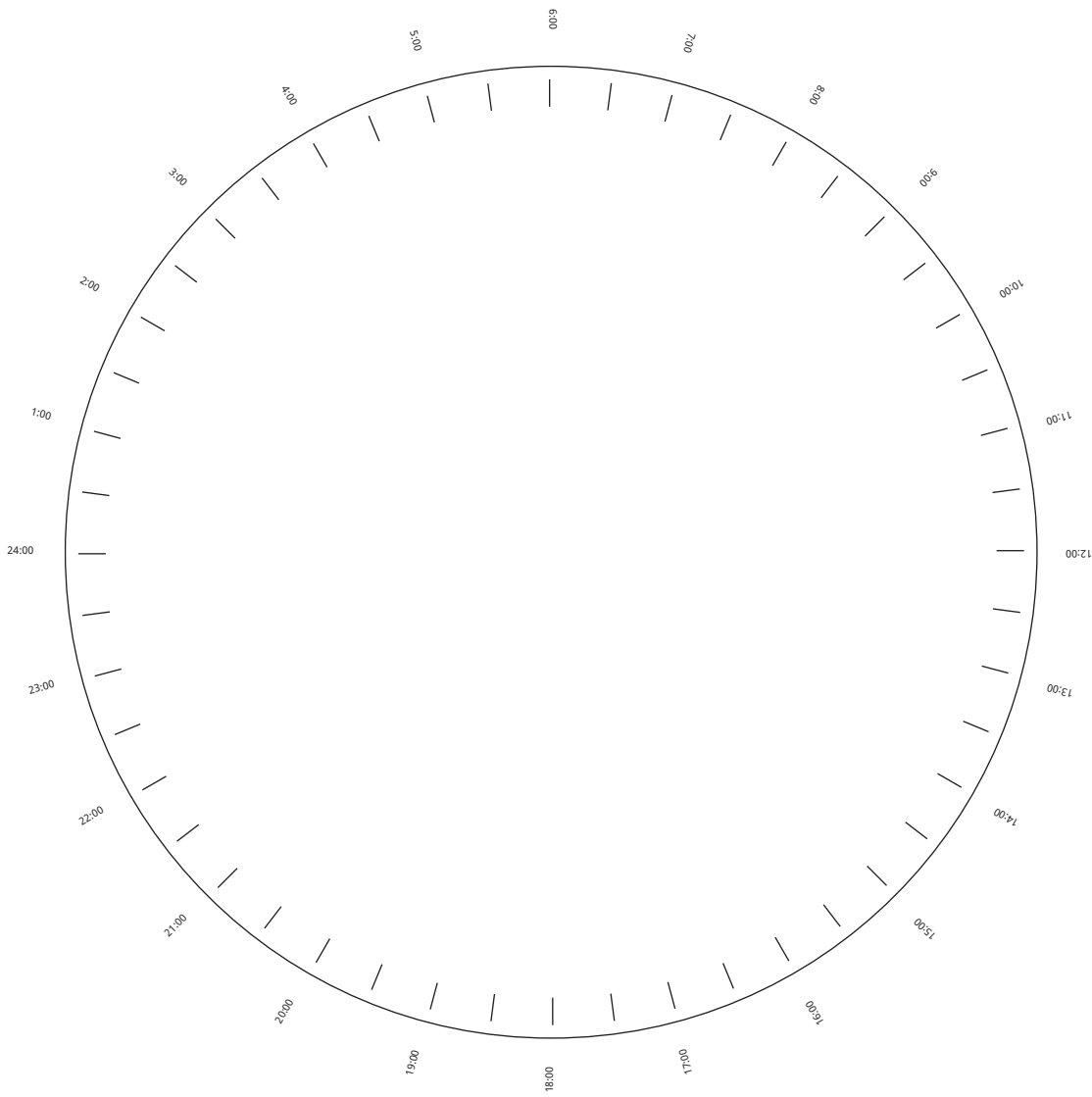
I go to bed at \_\_\_\_\_

I sleep for \_\_\_\_\_

My school starts at \_\_\_\_\_

My school ends at \_\_\_\_\_

I am at school for \_\_\_\_\_





## ***Tell us Your Stewardship Story***

Interested in telling us your stewardship story? **Hooray!**

### What do you mean by “stewardship”?

Christian stewardship recognizes that all of our possessions (both tangible and intangible) have been given to us by God. God is the owner. We are the managers. Your story must be about your stewardship of your time or talents or resources for the glory of God.

## What are the requirements? **Easy!**

- The story must be true and about you.
- The story must have a stewardship theme.
- Maximum length: 3 minutes/500-word limit.

## How to Submit Stories

Photocopy the entry form below for you and your students in grades 5-8 to complete. Then mail or upload your class submissions. Stories may also be typewritten.

## Submission Form

Teachers: Mail completed submission forms to: **Stewardship Ministries** 9705 Patuxent Woods Dr., Columbia, MD 21046. Or upload student's submission forms online at **[nadstewardship.org/stories](http://nadstewardship.org/stories)**.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

This is my stewardship story:\_\_\_\_\_

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.