

Session 9 · Eyes Opened

Tobit 10-11 · Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. Participants will discover the homecoming: two old people counting days at a window and a road, a blind father who runs stumbling toward his son's voice, and healing that arrives through fish gall on believing eyes. They will watch the second prayer of chapter 3 close, and they will find, with their own hands in John 9, that Jesus heals a blind man in Tobit's own grammar, and names the reason with this study's own phrase hidden inside it.

Catholic Touchstone. The sacramental principle in full: God saves bodily creatures bodily, binding real grace to humble matter, word, and faith, a preference that comes to full stature in the seven sacraments and the Anointing of the Sick. The press meets cessationism: the claim that the age of miraculous healing gifts closed with the apostles.

What You Need to Know

Chapter 10 returns to Nineveh and to the arithmetic of love: Tobit is counting the days of the journey, and when the count runs over, the household divides along the fault line we know. Tobit reasons, perhaps Gabael has died and there is no one to give him the money; Anna concludes, my child has perished, and begins the vigil that wrings every parent in your group: she goes out every day to the road by which they had left, eats no bread by day, and mourns her son at night. Tobit's comfort, be still and stop worrying; he is in good health, is brave, but she is past comforting. Read this chapter with tenderness: the reader knows the feast that is delaying them; the parents know only the silence. This is the last and longest stretch of the book's signature gap, grief lived inside an already-answered prayer, and the group has now been trained for nine weeks to feel both levels at once. Meanwhile in Ecbatana, Tobias refuses Raguel's plea to stay: I must return to my father and mother, filial duty pulling against new joy; and Raguel's farewell to his daughter is its own small masterpiece of in-law theology: honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law; they are now your parents (10:12).

Chapter 11 is the payoff, and its choreography deserves slow reading. Raphael and Tobias go ahead of the caravan, and the angel gives the final prescription: take the gall in your hand; anoint his eyes; when they smart he will rub them, and the white films will scale off, and he will see you (11:7-8). The dog comes along after them (11:4). Anna, at her post on the road, sees them first: behold, your son is coming! Her embrace comes with the line that should stop the room: I have seen you, my child; now I am ready to die (11:9), and the group will hear its echo in Simeon before the night is out. Then the detail that undoes readers: Tobit, hearing his son, stumbled out through the door, blind, running toward a voice, and it is his son who reaches him. Tobias applies the gall; the films scale off from the corners of his eyes; and note carefully what the first healed sight does: he sees his son, embraces him, weeps, and blesses: Blessed art thou, O God... For thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias! (11:13-15). The first use of restored eyes is recognition and doxology. Then Tobit, who has not left the house in years, goes rejoicing to the city gate to meet his daughter-in-law, praising God through the streets while Nineveh marvels; seven more days of feast; and, quietly, verse 18: Ahikar came to the feast, the seed from Session 1, planted in a footnote, blooming at the table.

Prepare the John 9 discovery with special care, because it is the study's hidden hinge. Jesus, meeting a man born blind, is asked who sinned; he answers: it was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but

that the works of God might be made manifest in him, and then heals with mud made of spittle and a commanded washing in Siloam (John 9:1-7). Your group will find, on their own, that Jesus heals blindness in Tobit's grammar, humble matter, a command, obedient faith, and some sharp participant may notice the phrase sitting in verse 3. If they do, smile, honor it, and say only: hold that phrase; someone is going to say it to us next week. Do not explain further; the angel owns the line, and Session 10 is built to let him say it. If no one notices, perfect; the detonation next week will be total either way.

OT Roots and Fulfillment

The homecoming gathers the Old Testament's watchers and weepers: Jacob, who refused comfort for a son he believed dead and whose spirit revived at the news he lives (Genesis 37:35; 45:26-28); Hannah's vigil; the psalmist's those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy (Psalm 126:5). Anna at the road is all of them. And the healing-through-means stands on the trace the group built in Session 6: the bronze serpent, Naaman's Jordan, commanded matter carrying God's cure, with Sirach 38:1-8, honor the physician, for the Lord created him... the Lord created medicines from the earth, adding the deuterocanon's own blessing on ordinary means.

The fulfillment converges from three directions. Anna's now I am ready to die anticipates Simeon's Nunc Dimittis: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace... for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (Luke 2:29-30), the prayer the Church sings every night at Compline: the eyes that have seen the promised one can close in peace. Tobit stumbling out the door toward his son's voice anticipates the father of the prodigal, who while he was yet at a distance... saw him and ran and embraced him (Luke 15:20), except Tobit runs blind, on voice alone, love outrunning sight. And the gall on the eyes anticipates the Lord's own clinic: mud and Siloam (John 9:6-7), spittle on a blind man's eyes at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23-25), touch and word and matter everywhere, until the Church, obedient to James 5:14-15, still anoints the sick with oil in his name. God's preference for saving bodily creatures bodily is not a phase he outgrew; it became the sacraments.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons · *Against Heresies* 5.3.2 (c. AD 180)

Against the Gnostics who despised the body, Irenaeus insists that the flesh is capable of receiving the power and gift of God, and that the God who formed us from clay does not abandon what he formed but heals and raises it. Gall on blind eyes, oil on sick bodies, water on newborn Christians: Irenaeus would say all of it flows from the same scandalous conviction, that God likes matter, made it, took it, and saves through it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ephrem the Syrian · *Hymns* (4th century)

The harp of the Spirit sings Christ as the Medicine of Life, the physician who came down to a wounded world and bound up its sores with his own hands, mixing salves from his humanity for the healing of all. Ephrem's whole poetry treats salvation as a healing and the sacraments as the Physician's pharmacy. Tobias walking home with a cure in his hand becomes, read through Ephrem's lens, a small early sketch of the Son walking into the world with the cure in his flesh.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo · *The City of God* 22.8 (c. AD 426)

Answering pagans who claimed the age of miracles had passed, Augustine catalogs, at length and

by name, healings he has verified in his own diocese, at the shrines of the martyrs and through the sacraments, and insists that miracles are wrought in Christ's name even now, only less famous for being local. Augustine stands squarely against tonight's press: the God of Tobit's homecoming has not retired, and the bishop of Hippo kept files to prove it.

Catechism Connection

CCC 1084 states the principle at full stature: Christ, seated at the Father's right hand, now acts through the sacraments to communicate his grace; the sacraments are perceptible signs, words and actions, which make present efficaciously the grace they signify. CCC 1127 gives the Church's confidence its formula: celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace they signify; they are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work. CCC 1503-1505 present Christ the physician, whose compassion toward the sick and whose healings, often through touch and means, signify a more radical healing, and who invites his disciples to continue his ministry to the sick. CCC 1520 names the graces of the Anointing of the Sick: strengthening, peace, and courage, and, if God wills, restoration of health. The gall of Tobit 11 is not a sacrament; it is the same divine handwriting, learned early.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH

- 1. The works of God, hidden.** Both prayers of chapter 3 are now answered in full view, and the phrase itself may surface tonight inside John 9:3. If a participant spots it, honor it and defer: someone says it to us next week. The angel's unveiling in Session 10 must arrive with all its powder dry.
- 2. Provision before need.** Final resolution: the gall, carried since the Tigris, spends itself on the eyes it was caught for. The pack is now empty and the thread complete; name it in review next week.
- 3. The seed in the palace.** Ahikar comes to the feast (11:18): the Session 1 footnote at the Session 9 table. Point at it with one sentence and move on; his last payoff waits in chapter 14.

Session Goals

1. Participants can narrate the double homecoming, Anna's road, Tobit's blind run, and identify the first act of healed eyes: recognition and doxology.
2. Participants have discovered John 9 themselves and can state the sacramental principle: matter, word, and faith, God's chosen grammar of healing, fulfilled in the sacraments.
3. Participants can answer cessationism with Augustine's files, the Church's ongoing verification of miracles, and the honest Catholic both-and: God heals through miracle, medicine, and sacrament, and sometimes, for reasons held in Session 2's sobriety, not yet.
4. Participants leave with one act of Anna's vigil converted: a person they will stop merely worrying about and start actively watching for, in prayer.

Time Note (90 minutes)

Win 10 min · Build 58 min · Send 12 min · Live It and closing prayer 10 min. The homecoming (questions 2-4) is the emotional center and the John 9 discovery (question 5) the doctrinal one; protect both. If you are running long, cut in this order: drop the Dig Deeper on Sirach 38 and medicine, compress question 1

(the waiting parents) to Anna's verses alone, and reduce the cessationism press's middle paragraph to Augustine's witness and the Lourdes sentence.

Eyes Opened

Tobit 10-11 · Discussion Guide · 90 minutes

Opening Prayer

Father, you kept a mother at her post on the road and gave a blind man legs that ran toward his son's voice. Bring us home tonight with them. Open our eyes as you opened Tobit's, and let the first thing we see be the faces you have given us to love, and behind them, you. Through Christ our Lord, who healed with mud and word. Amen.

Win · Opening the Door (10 minutes)

W1. Did you schedule your act of commanded joy? Tell us, and if it already happened, how did celebration change the mercy it honored?

W2. Describe a homecoming you will never forget, an airport, a driveway, a hospital door. What did the waiting do to the reunion?

Build · Into the Text (58 minutes)

The Arithmetic of Love

1. Read Tobit 10:1-7. The journey has run past its count, and the two parents process the silence differently: trace what Tobit does with it and what Anna does with it. Neither knows what the reader knows. Which parent are you, when someone you love goes silent, and what does the text refuse to do to either of them?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Tobit computes: he re-runs the itinerary, generates benign explanations, perhaps Gabael has died and no one can release the money, and manages Anna with be still and stop worrying. Anna concludes: my child has perished, stops eating by day, mourns by night, and takes up a post every day on the road by which they left. He copes by hypothesis, she by vigil, and the text honors both and mocks neither: this is the last long stretch of the book's signature gap, grief lived inside an already-answered prayer, and the parents' pain is real even though the reader can see the feast delaying the caravan. Note what Anna's despair does not do: it does not leave the road. My child has perished, she says, and goes out to watch for him anyway. Hope, at its lowest, is where the body stands.

2. Now the approach. Read Tobit 11:5-9. Anna, at her post, sees them first. Her cry, and then her embrace: I have seen you, my child; now I am ready to die. A live discovery: someone find Luke 2:28-32, Simeon in the temple, and read it aloud. What prayer of the Church did Anna just pray early, and what do the two scenes together say about what eyes are for?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Simeon, promised he would not see death before seeing the Lord's Christ, takes the child in his arms: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace... for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. It is the Nunc Dimittis, sung by the Church every single night at Compline, and Anna of Nineveh

prays its human draft on a dusty road: I have seen you; now I am ready to die. Both scenes claim the same thing about eyes: they are for seeing the promise kept, and a life's watching is completed, not wasted, in one recognition. Every parent, every keeper of a long vigil, and everyone who has waited at a window in this study is in Anna's cry, and the Church puts her grammar on all our lips nightly: let your servant go in peace, for my eyes have seen.

The Blind Man Who Ran

3. Read Tobit 11:9-15 slowly. First, verse 10: what does Tobit do when he hears his son's voice, and why is it the most affecting sentence in the book? Then the healing: what exactly does Tobias do with the gall, what happens to the white films, and, watch verses 13-15 closely, what is the very first thing Tobit's healed eyes do?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Tobit, blind for years, stumbled out through the door, running toward a voice he cannot see the source of, and it is his son who reaches him and steadies him. Love outruns sight; the prodigal's father will run the same road in Luke 15:20, but he at least could see his son coming. Then the cure, in the grammar we have learned: commanded means (the gall, carried since the Tigris), applied by a son's hand, the smarting, the rubbing, and the white films scale off from the corners of his eyes. And the first act of healed sight: not an inventory of the house, not the sky, he sees his son, falls on his neck, weeps, and blesses: Blessed art thou, O God... For thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias! Recognition, embrace, doxology: the book's answer to what eyes are for, given twice in one chapter. And mark the theology inside the blessing: afflicted and shown mercy are held in one sentence, by the man who lived both, no erasure of the affliction, no resentment surviving the mercy. Session 11 will hear him build a whole hymn on that sentence.

4. Read Tobit 11:16-18. The man who has not left his house in years walks rejoicing to the city gate, praising God through the streets of Nineveh, to welcome his daughter-in-law; the city marvels; seven more days of feast, and, look at verse 18, a familiar name comes to the table. Who is at the feast, where have we met him, and what has the book been doing with him since chapter 1?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Tobit's first journey on healed eyes is outward and public: to the gate, through the streets, praising loudly, to receive Sarah with a father's welcome, the recluse of the dark years become the town's evidence that God shows mercy. And at the feast: Ahikar, the nephew planted in a half-verse of chapter 1, who sheltered Tobit at court and fed him two years in his blindness, now sits at the table of the joy. The book has been running him as a nine-chapter demonstration of its quietest doctrine: providence plants its helpers in the footnotes, long before the need, and gathers them at the feast when the need is past. One payoff still remains for him, in the book's last chapter; watch for it.

The Clinic of God

5. The summit discovery of the night. Someone find John 9:1-7 and read it aloud, all seven verses, unhurried. Jesus meets a man born blind. List everything in his method: what does he use, what does he command, when does the healing land? Now set it beside Tobit 11:7-13. What have you discovered about how the Lord of heaven heals blindness, and did anything in verse 3 catch anyone's ear?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The method: Jesus spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, then commanded, go, wash in the pool of Siloam, and the healing lands on obedience:

he went and washed and came back seeing. Set beside Tobit: anointing of blind eyes with humble matter, a command, faith that does as it is told, sight arriving through the means. The Lord who could heal by pure fiat, and elsewhere does, chooses here to heal in Tobit's exact grammar: matter, word, obedient faith. That is the sacramental principle standing at full height: God saves bodily creatures bodily, and his Son's own clinic ratifies the method this book taught Israel. He does it again with spittle at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23-25), and his Church does it still: oil, water, bread, word, hands, the sacraments confer the grace they signify because Christ himself is at work in them (CCC 1127), and his priests to this day anoint the sick in his name (James 5:14-15; CCC 1520).

As for verse 3: Jesus is asked who sinned, and answers, it was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. If someone in your group caught that phrase, honor them, and say only this: hold it. Someone is going to say almost exactly those words to us next week, and when he does, this whole study's title will come home. Say no more.

DIG DEEPER

Does God's fondness for means diminish medicine? The deuterocanon answers from inside: honor the physician, for the Lord created him; the Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them (Sirach 38:1-8, another book most Protestant Bibles are missing). The Catholic account has no rivalry between the doctor, the sacrament, and the miracle: all three are God healing through what he made, ordinary providence, covenanted grace, and extraordinary sign. Tobit's gall sits at the joint of all three: a natural substance, angelically prescribed, effective by God's power. The believer takes the medicine, receives the anointing, and prays for the miracle, and thanks the same God for whichever door the healing walks through.

Build, Then Press: Doesn't God Do This Anymore?

BUILD, THEN PRESS

The Cessationist Objection, Given at Full Strength

This objection lives in serious Protestant theology and in the quiet disappointment of many Catholics, so give it full strength: miracles like Tobit's were sign-gifts, given to authenticate revelation while Scripture was being established, and those gifts ceased with the apostles. The careful cessationist does not deny that God can still answer prayer, even extraordinarily; he denies that healing remains an ongoing gift or ministry the Church may institutionalize and promise. That is why, says the cessationist, the healings cluster in Scripture and thin out afterward; why your prayers for healing so often meet silence; and why claimed modern miracles dissolve under scrutiny into anecdote, coincidence, and wishful diagnosis. A sober faith should expect God to work through doctors and providence now, not gall and angels, and a Church that keeps promising miracles is writing checks God no longer signs. The kind version of this objection is pastoral: it wants to protect the sick from false hope.

6. Concede what deserves it, including the pastoral instinct. Then press on two fronts: the claim's scriptural warrant, and its history. What does Scripture actually say about healing continuing (James 5:14-15)? What did Augustine find when he checked his own diocese? What does the Church's own hard-nosed practice at Lourdes and in canonization causes say? And what must an honest Catholic answer still hold from Session 2?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede first: the pastoral instinct is honorable, false promises of healing have wounded real

people, and any Catholic answer that guarantees miracles on demand is presumption, not faith. Concede too that discernment is required; credulity is not a virtue, and the Church agrees more than the objector knows.

Now press the warrant: Scripture nowhere announces an expiration date on God's healing. The verse cessationism needs does not exist, while the verses against it do: James 5:14-15 institutes ongoing practice, is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, a standing ordinance, not a first-century memo, and the Church has obeyed it without interruption; it is the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Then press the history: Augustine, no enthusiast, answered this exact claim in the fifth century by publishing verified local healings from his own diocese (City of God 22.8), remarking that modern miracles are less famous, not less real. And the Church's present practice is more skeptical than the skeptic: the Lourdes medical bureau has recognized only about seventy cures in a century and a half of thousands of claims, precisely because it employs hostile scrutiny, unexplained by current medicine, verified across years, and canonization causes ordinarily still require miracles subjected to rigorous medical examination. An institution manufacturing wishful anecdotes would not run its evidence desk that way.

Then hold the honest Catholic both-and, with Session 2's sobriety intact: God heals through medicine (Sirach 38 blesses the physician), through the sacraments (whose first aim is grace, strength, and peace, with bodily healing if God wills, CCC 1520), and sometimes through miracle, and sometimes, for reasons he has not published, not yet, and the not-yet is not evidence of his retirement, any more than Tobit's four dark years were. The cessationist protects the sick by lowering their expectations of God; the Church protects them by widening what they may expect: real grace always, real healing often, by many doors, and resurrection finally, when every white film on creation scales away for good.

Send · Taking It Out the Door (12 minutes)

- S1.** The first thing Tobit's healed eyes did was see a face and bless God. If God healed your sight of its oldest blindness tonight, resentment, envy, distraction, screens, what face would he want you to actually see this week, and what would seeing it cost you?
- S2.** Anna kept a post on the road for someone everyone else had written off. Who are you currently only worrying about that God may be asking you to actively watch for, in daily, stubborn, bodily prayer?

Live It This Week

1. Convert one worry into a vigil: name the person, and take a post, a set time and place of daily prayer for them this week, standing where Anna stood. Hope is where the body stands.
2. Pray the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-32) each night before sleep this week, the Church's own bedtime, and before it, name aloud one thing your eyes saw that day that was mercy.
3. If illness touches your life or your family's, ask your pastor about the Anointing of the Sick, it is for those facing serious illness, the frailty of old age, or serious surgery, not only those at the point of death (CCC 1514-1515), and read Tobit 12 before next session. It is short. Read it twice. Everything in this study meets us there.

Closing Prayer

Blessed are you, O God: you afflict, and you show mercy, and your mercies come home by dusty roads. Heal the blindness we have gotten used to, station us faithfully on the roads where our people

may return, and let the first work of every healing you give us be recognition, embrace, and praise. Through Christ our Lord, who anointed blind eyes and sent them washing. Amen.

Scripture Memory · Tobit 11:15 (RSV2CE)

"For thou hast afflicted me, but thou hast had mercy upon me; here I see my son Tobias!"

Leader Reference Card

Every passage in order of use

Q1 Tobit 10:1-7 · Tobit computes, Anna keeps the road

Context Tobit 10:7-12 · the farewell; honor your in-laws

Q2 Tobit 11:5-9 · Anna's cry: now I am ready to die

Q2 live discovery Luke 2:28-32 · the Nunc Dimittis

Q3 Tobit 11:9-15 · the blind run; the gall; first sight

Q3 parallel Luke 15:20 · the father who ran

Q4 Tobit 11:16-18 · the gate, the feast, Ahikar at table

Q5 live discovery John 9:1-7 · clay, Siloam, and verse 3 held for next week

Q5 parallels Mark 8:23-25 · James 5:14-15

Dig Deeper Sirach 38:1-8 · honor the physician

Steelman chain James 5:14-15 · City of God 22.8 · Lourdes and canonization scrutiny

Memory Tobit 11:15

Catechism CCC 1084 · CCC 1127 · CCC 1503-1505 · CCC 1520