

Session 10 · I Am Raphael

Tobit 12 · Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim. Participants will stand in the room when the day laborer unveils himself: I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints. Tonight the study's title detonates, the phrase held since Session 9 comes home, the deferred sola fide question promised in Session 4 gets its full-strength hearing, and the group discovers Tobit's seven angels again in Revelation 8.

Catholic Touchstone. Three doctrines converge: the Lenten triad of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; the intercession of angels (and by extension the logic of all heavenly intercession) held rightly within Christ's one mediation; and the Catholic teaching on grace, charity, and merit against the strongest sola fide reading of almsgiving delivers from death and purges away every sin.

What You Need to Know

Chapter 12 opens with a wage settlement and ends with an ascension. Tobit, restored and just, wants to over-pay the guide: half of everything brought back (12:1-5), a fortune offered to the hired man, and the reader smiles one last time at the gap before it closes for good. Raphael calls father and son aside privately, and his farewell discourse (12:6-15) is the theological summit of the book. It moves in three waves. First, doxology as duty: praise God and give thanks to him... do not be slow to give him thanks, crowned by the sentence this entire study is named for: it is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God (12:7). Let that verse land with everything you have been saving: for ten weeks the group has watched the works of God done in secret, and now heaven's own courier declares the secret's expiration date. If anyone caught the phrase in John 9:3 last week, tonight is the payoff: Jesus, asked to explain a man's blindness, answered that the works of God might be made manifest in him, and then healed blind eyes with anointing and command, the Lord himself speaking Tobit's thesis over Tobit's signature affliction. The study's title has been hiding in plain sight on both Testaments' lips.

Second wave: the triad. Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness... it is better to give alms than to treasure up gold. For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin (12:8-9). Here is the verse you promised the group in Session 4, now on an angel's lips, and tonight's steelman gives the Reformation objection its full strength before the Catholic answer. Prepare that chain more carefully than any other in the study; it is the doctrinal deep water, and the guide below equips you to concede everything that must be conceded (nothing purges sin apart from Christ's grace, and the Church condemns Pelagianism as firmly as any Reformer) while holding what Scripture actually says. Third wave: the unveiling. When you and your daughter-in-law Sarah prayed, I brought a reminder of your prayer before the Holy One; and when you buried the dead, I was likewise present with you... I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One (12:11-15). Every hidden scene of the book is suddenly annotated: the prayers were carried, the burials were attended, the testing (I was sent to test you, 12:13) was supervised, and the healing was commissioned. The two fall on their faces; the angel's first word is the Bible's angelic refrain, do not be afraid, and his last instructions are the book's own

birth certificate: bless God for ever... write in a book everything that has happened (12:17-20). Then he ascends, and they can see him no more.

Two preparation notes. First, on 12:15 and Revelation 8: the discovery that John's seven angels who stand before God, with the incense that rises with the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:2-4), match Tobit's self-description is the night's second detonation, and it grounds the whole Catholic logic of heavenly intercession, so rehearse the 1 Timothy 2:5 objection and its answer until you can give both fairly. Second, on 12:19, all these days I merely appeared to you: this is the book's own sober angelology, angels are pure spirits (CCC 328-330), and it retroactively justifies the veiling weighed in Session 5: the accommodation was mercy, and the angel himself files the disclosure paperwork.

OT Roots and Fulfillment

Raphael's discourse gathers the book's Torah roots into final form: almsgiving as covenant obedience (Deuteronomy 15), truth-telling doxology in the tradition of the psalms of thanksgiving, and the testing of the righteous that Abraham knew on Moriah (Genesis 22:1) and Job under heaven's gaze, now given its gentlest statement: I was sent to test you, from the God who was never absent from the trial. The angelic presentation of prayer stands in the tradition of the angel of the Lord who ascends in the flame of Manoah's offering (Judges 13:20) and the living traffic of Jacob's ladder.

The fulfillment lines are the strongest in the study. The triad of 12:8 becomes the skeleton of Matthew 6, where Jesus takes almsgiving, prayer, and fasting as the assumed practices of his disciples and interiorizes each, when you give alms... when you pray... when you fast, and the Church has handed that triad to every generation as the shape of Lent (CCC 1434). The seven angels who stand before God reappear in Revelation 8:2, and in the same scene an angel at the altar presents the incense that rose with the prayers of the saints... before God (Revelation 8:3-4). It is the same heavenly ministry Raphael describes: angels before the Glory, prayers carried and presented by angelic hands. The works of God revealed lands on Jesus' own lips over the man born blind (John 9:3). And write in a book everything that has happened is the vocation of the evangelists: these are written that you may believe (John 20:31). Tobit 12 does not merely anticipate the New Testament; the New Testament keeps echoing it back.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage · *On the Lord's Prayer 32 (c. AD 252)*

Teaching the Church to pray, Cyprian appeals directly to tonight's chapter: Raphael the angel bears witness, he says, that prayer joined with fasting and almsgiving ascends and is heard, and that petitions reach God swiftly when good works commend them. For Cyprian this is not Tobit trivia; it is the Church's operating manual for prayer, certified by an angel who watched petitions arrive.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Peter Chrysologus · *Sermon 43 (5th century)*

The golden-worded Doctor binds the triad into one living body, in lines the Church still reads every Lent: prayer, mercy, and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other. Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting... if you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. Raphael's sentence, prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness, is Chrysologus' whole sermon in seed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great · *Sermon 39, On Lent (c. AD 450)*

Preaching the great fast, Leo teaches that what each Christian owes God in every season is paid with special devotion in Lent through the triple remedy of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving: prayer seeks, fasting frees, and mercy gives what grace has given us. When your group keeps their next Lent, they will be obeying Raphael's farewell discourse as the Church has structured it for fifteen centuries.

Catechism Connection

CCC 1434 names the triad as the Christian's interior penance expressed in the very three forms Raphael lists: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. CCC 335 shows the Church praying inside the angelic liturgy, joining her voice to theirs and invoking their assistance. On the steelman's deep water: CCC 1996 defines grace as favor, the free and undeserved help God gives; CCC 2010 draws the crucial line, since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, and then completes it: moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed... for the attainment of eternal life; and CCC 2006 seals it with the Church's own liturgy, in St. Augustine's maxim: in crowning the saints' merits, God crowns his own gifts; CCC 2011 then gives the doctrine its purest voice in St. Thérèse, who hopes to appear before God with empty hands, clothed in his justice. That sequence, grace first and alone at the root, grace-enabled charity genuinely fruitful afterward, is the entire Catholic answer to tonight's objection in three paragraphs.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH

- 1. The works of God: DETONATED TONIGHT.** The angel says the title (12:7); John 9:3 comes home from last week; ten weeks of double vision resolve into a commission. Give the moment silence after the verse is read.
- 2. Almsgiving as treasure: ANSWERED TONIGHT.** Anna asked in Session 2, where are your charities? The angel answers: when you buried the dead, I was present with you; almsgiving delivers from death. One more echo remains, Ahikar's, in Session 12. Name Anna's question aloud tonight and let the group hear it answered.
- 3. Prayer heard in silence: ANSWERED TONIGHT.** I brought a reminder of your prayer before the Holy One. Every window-level prayer in this study has just been shown its courier. Connect it explicitly to the group's own Session 3 Live It prayers.

Session Goals

1. Participants can recite the title verse and connect 12:7 to John 9:3, stating the study's thesis: God's hidden works are ordered toward glorious revelation.
2. Participants can give the full Catholic answer on almsgiving and salvation: grace alone at the root, grace-enabled charity genuinely effective in the life of grace, with Luke 11:41 and 1 Peter 4:8 in hand.
3. Participants have found Revelation 8:2-4 themselves and can explain heavenly intercession within Christ's one mediation, answering 1 Timothy 2:5 fairly.
4. Participants leave with a rule-of-life draft of the triad: one concrete practice each of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Time Note (90 minutes)

Win 8 min · Build 62 min · Send 10 min · Live It and closing prayer 10 min. This is the study's doctrinal summit; the sola fide chain needs 22 minutes and the Revelation 8 discovery 12. If you are running long, cut in this order: drop the Dig Deeper on 12:19 and angelic natures, compress the wage scene (question 1) to two sentences of leader summary, and move the write in a book material (question 6) into Send.

I Am Raphael

Tobit 12 · Discussion Guide · 90 minutes

Opening Prayer

God of glory, your angel walked our roads in work clothes and carried our prayers into your presence. Unveil tonight what you have been doing among us in secret. Give us the humility of the triad, the confidence of children whose prayers are presented before you, and voices unashamed to reveal your works. Through Christ our Lord, the one mediator, in whom all heaven serves. Amen.

Win · Opening the Door (8 minutes)

- W1.** Last week you stood a vigil and prayed the Nunc Dimittis at night. What did a week of Anna's posture and Simeon's prayer do to you?
- W2.** Have you ever learned, after the fact, who someone really was, and had to re-read every memory of them? What did the re-reading feel like?

Build · Into the Text (62 minutes)

The Secret of the King

- 1.** Read Tobit 12:1-7. Tobit tries to pay the guide half of everything, and Raphael, before any unveiling, gives father and son a private charge, ending in the sentence this study is named for: It is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God. Sit with the contrast: what is the difference between a king's secret and God's works, and why does one demand discretion while the other demands proclamation?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A king's secret serves the king: disclosure costs him advantage, so loyalty guards it. God's works serve the world: concealment costs the world hope, so loyalty proclaims them. God's hiddenness, the book has taught for ten weeks, is strategic and temporary, providence works incognito, but its terminus is always revelation and praise; the secret has an expiration date, and gratitude is its executor. And now the callback: last week, some of you caught a phrase in John 9:3. Have someone read it again: it was not that this man sinned... but that the works of God might be made manifest in him, and then Jesus anointed blind eyes. The Lord himself, standing over Tobit's own affliction, speaks Tobit's thesis: hidden purpose, ordered to manifestation. Ten weeks of double vision were training for one duty: when you finally see what God was doing, say so, gloriously and out loud. Give this a beat of silence before moving on; the study's title just came home.

The Triad

- 2.** Read Tobit 12:8. Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness. A live discovery: someone skim Matthew 6:1-18 and report its structure: what three practices does Jesus assume his disciples do, and what one word does he attach to each? Where has the Church built this triad into your year?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Matthew 6 runs on Raphael's exact triad, in the Lord's assuming grammar: when you give alms, when you pray, when you fast, never if, and to each Jesus attaches in secret, with the Father who sees in secret rewarding, the theology of hiddenness this whole book taught. The Church has kept the triad as the architecture of Lent for fifteen centuries and names it as the three forms of the Christian's interior penance (CCC 1434). The point for your group: this is not a menu but an organism, prayer aimed at God, fasting freeing the self, almsgiving turned to neighbor, and as St. Peter Chrysologus says on the take-home, the three are one and give life to each other. A Christian practicing one without the others is rowing with one oar.

Build, Then Press: The Verse That Helped Start a Reformation (Part Two of Two)

BUILD, THEN PRESS

The Sola Fide Objection, Given at Full Strength

Session 4 promised this hearing; pay the debt in full. Read Tobit 12:9 aloud: almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Now the objection at its strongest: Paul says, for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9); a man is justified by faith apart from works of law (Romans 3:28); and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Purging sin is the Cross's work, purchased at Calvary, applied by faith. A verse that assigns that power to my donations does not merely overstate charity; it competes with the atonement, teaches man to trust his own works, and feeds the exact anxiety-driven, merit-counting religion the Reformation rose against. And notice, says the objector, where this verse lives: in a book the Hebrew canon never held. The doctrine and the canon problems are the same problem. This verse is why these books are dangerous.

3. Concede first, and generously: what in that objection is precious and true, and where does the Catholic Church herself say so? Then press with Scripture the objector accepts: who else talks the way Raphael talks? Read Luke 11:41, Daniel 4:27, Proverbs 16:6, 1 Peter 4:8, and Matthew 25:34-40. Finally, resolve it: what is the Catholic account of grace, charity, and merit that holds all these texts without cutting any of them?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede with both hands, because these concessions are Catholic doctrine: no one can purge their own sin; salvation's initiative belongs entirely to God; the Church teaches that no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification (CCC 2010), condemned Pelagianism centuries before the Reformation, and confesses that every purging of sin flows from Calvary alone. If Tobit 12:9 meant that almsgiving is an independent detergent for guilt, a rival fountain to the Cross, the objection would win, and the Church would agree with it.

Now press with the objector's own canon, because Raphael's grammar is everywhere in it. Jesus: give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you (Luke 11:41), the Lord himself attaching cleansing to almsgiving. Daniel to a pagan king: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed (Daniel 4:27). Proverbs: by loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for (16:6). Peter: love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). And the King at the judgment welcomes the blessed on the evidence of mercy shown: as you did it to one of the least of these (Matthew 25:34-40). If Tobit 12:9 competes with the atonement, so do Christ, Daniel, Solomon, and Peter. Since they do not, there must be a way such sentences are true, and finding it is better theology than deleting the books that contain them.

Here is the way, and it is the Catholic doctrine of grace entire: charity is not a rival of the Cross but its current. Grace comes first, alone, unmerited, planting God's own love in the soul; but once planted, that love is not ornamental, it acts, and its acts are genuinely ours and genuinely count, because God has dignified his children as real causes (CCC 306, met in Session 8, now paying doctrinal rent). So Scripture can say without blushing that grace-born charity covers sins, delivers from death, and stores treasure, faith working through love (Galatians 5:6), because in the man who gives alms out of love for God, it is grace itself doing the delivering, through him. One necessary precision: this fruitfulness lives only inside the life of grace and never bypasses repentance or the sacraments Christ instituted; grave sin is ordinarily remitted through sacramental confession (CCC 1446, 1856), while grace-born charity and almsgiving remit venial sin, deepen conversion, and grow the divine life already given (CCC 1434). As the Church prays in words drawn from St. Augustine: in crowning their merits, you are crowning your own gifts (CCC 2006). Tobit himself is the proof of the right reading: his almsgiving flowed from remembering God with all his heart (Session 1), was tallied by heaven while earning him nothing but loss for ten chapters, and delivered him in God's time, not as wages extracted from a debtor God but as a Father's promise kept. And gently return the canon point: this verse did not corrupt the Bible's doctrine of charity; it taught the Bible's doctrine of charity so clearly that a later controversy found it inconvenient. Polycarp, John's own disciple, was quoting this very sentence, almsgiving delivers from death, in his Letter to the Philippians (10.2) while the ink of the New Testament was barely dry. The Reformation's true target, anxious merit-counting before an unpaid God, deserved to fall. Raphael was never teaching it.

The Unveiling

4. Now the moment ten weeks have built toward. Read Tobit 12:11-15 aloud, slowly, and let someone different read the angel's words. List everything Raphael reveals about what was really happening in chapters 2 through 11: every hidden annotation. Which revelation moves you most, and why?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The annotations: when you and Sarah prayed, I brought a reminder of your prayer before the Holy One, the window-level prayers had a courier, and both of them, the patriarch's and the grieving girl's, were hand-delivered; when you buried the dead, I was likewise present with you, the shovel-work behind Nineveh's wall, done in secret at mortal risk, had an angelic witness standing in the dark; when you did not hesitate to rise and leave your dinner, heaven noticed a cold meal; I was sent to test you, the affliction was supervised, never abandoned (Session 2's sobriety, now signed); and God sent me to heal you and Sarah, the double commission of 3:17, confirmed from the courier's own mouth. Then the name: I am Raphael, God-heals, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One. Let people answer which annotation moves them most; the buried-dead line usually wins, because it means the costliest hidden obediences of our lives have had witnesses all along.

5. The second detonation. Raphael says he is one of seven who present the prayers of the saints before the Glory. Live discovery: someone find Revelation 8:2-4 and read it aloud. What did you just find, and what does the pair of texts teach about what happens to your prayers after you say them? And answer the fair objection someone should raise: doesn't 1 Timothy 2:5 say there is one mediator between God and men?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

John sees the seven angels who stand before God, and another angel at the altar with much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints, and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of

the saints from the hand of the angel before God. The New Testament's heaven contains exactly the ministry Raphael claimed: prayers are not shouted into a void; they are received, carried, and presented, liturgically, by name. That is the biblical basis for what Catholics mean by the intercession of angels and saints, and the 1 Timothy 2:5 objection deserves its honest answer: yes, there is one mediator, Christ Jesus, and his unique mediation is the reason heavenly intercession exists rather than the casualty of it. Notice that Paul writes that sentence two verses after commanding that supplications, prayers, intercessions be made by us for all men (1 Timothy 2:1): if creatures interceding violated the one mediation, Paul's own command would violate it first. Asking a friend on earth to pray for you and having a friend in heaven present your prayer are the same act at different altitudes, and both run entirely inside the mediation of Christ, in whom angels and saints live, move, and carry incense. Raphael himself draws the line with perfect care: I did not come as a favor on my part, but by the will of our God (12:18); the courier claims nothing; the King sends, the King heals, the courier carries. That is every saint's job description, and Mary's, and it threatens Christ's mediation exactly as much as the mailman threatens the letter's author.

DIG DEEPER

All these days I merely appeared to you and did not eat or drink, but you were seeing a vision (12:19). The book's angelology is sober: angels are pure spirits, servants and messengers, not glorified humans and not gods (CCC 328-330), and Raphael's assumed visibility was accommodation, mercy wearing a shape the family could bear, exactly as weighed in Session 5's press. Note the aftermath too: they fell face down in terror at the unveiling (12:16), which retroactively vindicates the veil, and the angel's response is the Bible's angelic refrain from Bethlehem to the empty tomb: do not be afraid. Unveiled heaven's first word to frightened humanity is, again and again, the same.

Write It Down

6. Read Tobit 12:16-22. The angel's last commands before ascending: bless God for ever, and write in a book everything that has happened. What is the relationship between those two commands? And what have you just watched, in these commands, about where books like Tobit, and the Gospels, come from?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Blessing is praise in the moment; writing is praise made durable, testimony that outlives the witness so that the works of God stay gloriously revealed for readers not yet born. You are holding the result: the book of Tobit presents itself as obedience to this very command, and the pattern is the Bible's own account of itself, these are written that you may believe (John 20:31). The doctrinal weight is real: revelation happens through deeds and the words that proclaim them (Dei Verbum 2), and Scripture is the Spirit-authored, Church-discerned form of that telling; the command to write is the pattern in miniature, not the proof of inspiration. The personal weight is the Send: the command did not expire with Tobit. Every person in this room has works of God in their history, some only visible now, after ten weeks of training, and the angel's grammar applies: guard your kings' secrets, and reveal your God's works. Next week we write.

Send · Taking It Out the Door (10 minutes)

S1. The angel annotated Tobit's hidden years: your prayers were carried, your burials were witnessed, your testing was supervised. If an angel annotated your hidden years tonight, which unseen obedience or unanswered prayer would you most need to hear was witnessed, and can you trust, on tonight's evidence, that it was?

S2. Prayer, fasting, almsgiving: which of the three is weakest in your life right now, and what is the smallest real version of it you could begin this week?

Live It This Week

1. Draft a rule of the triad: one concrete practice of prayer, one of fasting, one of almsgiving, small enough to keep, written down, beginning this week. Bring it next session.
2. Practice revealed praise once: tell one person, out loud, one specific work of God in your life, using his name as the subject of the sentence. Guard your kings' secrets; reveal your God's works.
3. Read Tobit 13 before next session, aloud if you can. It is a hymn written by a man who got his eyes back. Notice what he does with the word Jerusalem, and what the streets are paved with.

Closing Prayer

Blessed are you, God of our fathers, who hear prayers at the window, attend burials in the dark, test without abandoning, and heal by name. Thank you for the couriers we cannot see. Build the triad into our weeks, keep our charity flowing from your grace and returning to your glory, and loosen our tongues: what you have done for us in secret, let us reveal gloriously. Through Christ our Lord, the one mediator, whom all your angels serve. Amen.

Scripture Memory · Tobit 12:7 (RSV2CE)

"It is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God."

Leader Reference Card

Every passage in order of use

Q1 Tobit 12:1-7 · the wage; the title verse

Q1 callback John 9:3 · the works of God made manifest

Q2 Tobit 12:8 · the triad

Q2 live discovery Matthew 6:1-18 · when you give, pray, fast

Steelman text Tobit 12:9 · Ephesians 2:8-9 · Romans 3:28 · 1 John 1:7

Steelman press Luke 11:41 · Daniel 4:27 · Proverbs 16:6 · 1 Peter 4:8 · Matthew 25:34-40

Steelman resolve Galatians 5:6 · CCC 2006 · CCC 2010-2011

Q4 Tobit 12:11-15 · the unveiling; I am Raphael

Q5 live discovery Revelation 8:2-4 · the seven; incense with the prayers

Q5 objection 1 Timothy 2:1-5 · intercession inside the one mediation

Dig Deeper Tobit 12:16-19 · CCC 328-330 · do not be afraid

Q6 Tobit 12:20-22 · write in a book; John 20:31

Memory Tobit 12:7

Catechism CCC 335 · CCC 1434 · CCC 1996 · CCC 2006 · CCC 2010-2011