

## Session 12 · Reveal the Works of God

*Tobit 14 · Leader Preparation Guide*

### SESSION OVERVIEW

**Discovery Aim.** Participants will read Tobit's second testament and watch every thread of the study resolve: Nineveh falls, Ahikar's almsgiving pays its final dividend and answers Anna's question in full, and the dying man prophesies that all the Gentiles will turn to fear the Lord God in truth, a prophecy your group will discover they are sitting inside. The session ends in commissioning: each participant writes and reveals a work of God from their own history.

**Catholic Touchstone.** The whole study gathered into Send: providence vindicated without triumphalism, hope that defers its final payment honestly to the end of the age, and testimony as the baptized life's standing duty. The final press meets the survivorship-bias objection: that Scripture only canonizes the stories that worked out.

### What You Need to Know

Chapter 14 is a deathbed with a horizon. Tobit, healed at sixty-six after eight years of blindness (14:2), lives long in peace, giving alms and praising God, and calls Tobias for a second testament, this one not about wages and roads but about history. Its first movement is severe mercy: leave Nineveh. I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown (14:4, and savor the irony: Jonah, the prophet whose Nineveh repented and was spared, is invoked over a Nineveh whose reprieve has run out; God's patience is real and God's patience ends). The empire that made burial a crime, that mocked the pious with impunity, is itself going to the grave, and no one will bury it. The second movement is hope with honest bookkeeping: Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt, but as the prophets of Israel have said... until the times of the age are completed (14:5): even Tobit's optimism is staged, a rebuilt temple first, and the glorious building for all generations only at the consummation. This book does not pretend the eschaton has arrived, which matters enormously for tonight's press.

The third movement is the summit, and your group is in it: then all the Gentiles will turn to fear the Lord God in truth, and will bury their idols. All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together (14:6-7). A dying exile in Nineveh, in a book most Bibles omit, prophesies the conversion of the nations, and the room where you are sitting is the evidence: a gathering of Gentiles, in Nebraska or wherever God has planted you, fearing the God of Israel, their ancestral idols buried, studying Israel's Scriptures. Do not rush this. Let the group physically look around the room and understand that they are inside the book's last prophecy, the down payment the Magi made now compounding through them. Then the fourth movement: the Ahikar payoff (14:10-11). Tobit's last lesson to his sons is a case study: see what Nadab did to Ahikar who had reared him, betrayal by an adopted son, a deathtrap laid, but Ahikar gave alms, and escaped the deathtrap which Nadab had set for him, but Nadab fell into the trap himself. So now, my children, consider what almsgiving accomplishes, and how righteousness delivers. The character planted in a half-verse of chapter 1, who sheltered Tobit, fed him blind, and came to the feast, turns out to have been the book's control experiment all along: a second life saved by almsgiving, independently confirming Raphael's doctrine, and answering Anna's Session 2 question, where are your charities and your righteous deeds?, with a completed data set: here, delivering everyone in sight. Tobit dies in peace at a great age and is buried with honor (14:11), the man who buried Israel's dead at mortal risk receives the burial he gave;

Tobias honors both parents' graves, moves his family to Media as instructed, and, before he dies old and full of years, he heard of the destruction of Nineveh... and he blessed the Lord God for ever and ever (14:15). The book's last verb is blessing, spoken over a fallen empire by the son of the man it could not break.

Structure the night differently than usual: a shorter inductive core, a full thread-resolution review (the study's own harvest), the final press, and then the commissioning, in which the group obeys Tobit 12:20 together: each person writes, briefly, one work of God from their own history, and reveals it aloud. Bring extra pens and paper. End the study the way the book ends: in blessing.

## OT Roots and Fulfillment

The chapter's roots run through the prophets Tobit trusts by name: Jonah over Nineveh (with Nahum's oracle thundering unnamed behind him: woe to the bloody city), Deuteronomy 30's gathering of the scattered, and the prophetic vision of the nations streaming to Zion (Isaiah 2:2-3; 56:6-8). Tobit dies exactly as the patriarchs die, testament given, buried with honor by his sons, joining Jacob and Joseph, whose bones also traveled on hope (Genesis 49-50).

The fulfillment is the Church. All the Gentiles will turn... and will bury their idols is the Great Commission in prophecy, go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), and its execution fills Acts: idols renounced in Thessalonica (you turned to God from idols, 1 Thessalonians 1:9), magic books burned in Ephesus (Acts 19:19), the nations gathering to the God of Israel until John's multitude that no man could number, from all tribes and peoples and tongues (Revelation 7:9). Nineveh's fall in 612 BC keeps the other half of the prophecy: empires that war on mercy get buried by history, and the mills grind slow and exceedingly fine. And write in a book, obeyed by Tobit in chapter 13, is obeyed at scale by the Church: four Gospels, a New Testament, and two millennia of testimony, so that the works of God stay gloriously revealed. Tonight your group joins the genre.

## Voices of the Church

### VOICES OF THE CHURCH

**St. Justin Martyr** · *Dialogue with Trypho* 41 and 117 (c. AD 155)

Justin, a Gentile philosopher converted to the God of Israel, tells his Jewish interlocutor that Malachi's prophecy of a pure offering among the nations is fulfilled before their eyes: in every place, among every people, Gentiles who once served idols now offer prayer and thanksgiving to the God and Father of all through the name of Jesus. Justin is Tobit 14:6 walking and arguing: a Gentile with buried idols, testifying a century after the Ascension that the dying prophecy of a Nineveh exile was coming true on every road of the empire.

### VOICES OF THE CHURCH

**St. Polycarp of Smyrna** · *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14 (c. AD 155)

We opened this study with Polycarp quoting Tobit; we close it with his death. Bound at the stake, the old bishop prays: I bless you, for you have counted me worthy of this day and this hour... I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you. Like Tobit, he dies in blessing; like Tobit, his community writes it in a book, the Church's earliest martyrdom account outside the New Testament, the first of the martyr-acts genre, so the work of God stays revealed. From his letter in Session 1 to his fire in Session 12, Polycarp brackets this study with its thesis: a life of almsgiving and truth, ending in doxology, published to the nations.

### VOICES OF THE CHURCH

**St. Paul VI** · *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41 (1975)

The pope of evangelization states the commissioning's logic: modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. Doctrine argued can be deflected; a work of God revealed from inside a life is far harder to dismiss. Tobit's book, Polycarp's martyrdom account, and the page your group writes tonight are the same instrument: witness, the form of teaching the world finds hardest to refute.

## Catechism Connection

CCC 1816 names tonight's duty: the disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it; and CCC 2472 adds that witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known. CCC 849 grounds the room's own existence: the Church, sent by God to the nations, strives to proclaim the Gospel to all men, Tobit 14:6 as the Church's marching orders. CCC 1010-1011 speak over Tobit's deathbed and every Christian's: because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning (CCC 1010), and the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: my desire is to depart and be with Christ (CCC 1011). And CCC 2300, met in Session 1, returns to close the arc: the bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, the doctrine Tobit risked everything for, and the honor he finally received.

## Thread Watch: Final Harvest

### THREAD WATCH

- 1. The works of God.** Hidden (Sessions 1-9), revealed by the angel (Session 10), sung (Session 11), and tonight commissioned: the group takes over the revealing. Resolve it by name in the review.
- 2. Almsgiving as treasure.** Planted in Session 1, wounded by Anna in Session 2, taught in Session 4, defended in Session 10, and paid in full tonight by Ahikar's case study (14:10-11). Read Anna's question aloud one last time, then read the answer.
- 3. The seed in the palace.** Ahikar: chapter 1 footnote, chapter 2 caretaker, chapter 11 feast guest, chapter 14 doctrine. Providence plants early, tends quietly, and files its proof at the end.
- 4. Provision, prayer, and the guess.** Resolved in Sessions 8-10; tonight they are reviewed, not reopened. The review question (Q4) walks all threads; keep it brisk and let participants do the harvesting.

## Session Goals

1. Participants can resolve every planted thread from memory and state the study's thesis in one sentence of their own.
2. Participants recognize themselves inside Tobit 14:6 and can articulate the line from this prophecy through the Magi and the Great Commission to their own chairs.
3. Participants can answer the survivorship objection with the Bible's own unresolved laments and the resurrection as hope's real ground.
4. Every participant writes and reveals one work of God from their own history before leaving.

## Time Note (90 minutes)

Win 8 min · Build 46 min · Final press 14 min · Commissioning 14 min · Closing blessing 8 min. The commissioning is the point of the night; protect its full quarter hour and do not let discussion eat it. If you are running long, cut in this order: drop the Dig Deeper on Nahum and 612 BC, compress question 2 (the staged hope of 14:5) into the leader's framing, and shorten the review (question 4) to three threads chosen by the group.

# Reveal the Works of God

Tobit 14 · Discussion Guide · 90 minutes

## Opening Prayer

*God of Tobit, Anna, Tobias, and Sarah, God of the road, the river, and the feast: you have walked us through this whole book, and through each other's lives, for twelve weeks. Tonight, gather the threads. Show us what you have been doing among us, loosen our tongues to reveal it, and send us out as witnesses of the works we have seen. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Win · Opening the Door (8 minutes)

**W1.** You prayed Tobit's hymn over your own life this week. Which line could you say honestly, and which line are you still growing into?

**W2.** In one sentence, no rehearsal: what has this book done to you?

## Build · Into the Text (46 minutes)

### A Deathbed with a Horizon

**1.** Read Tobit 14:1-4. Tobit's last testament begins: leave Nineveh, for I fully believe what Jonah the prophet said about Nineveh, that it will be overthrown. Savor the irony of citing Jonah, of all prophets, against Nineveh. What is Tobit teaching his sons about God's patience, and about empires?

#### ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jonah is the prophet whose Nineveh repented and was spared, the Old Testament's greatest monument to God's patience with the wicked city, and Tobit invokes him over a Nineveh whose reprieve has run out. The lesson is double-edged: God's patience is real, a whole generation was spared at a preacher's word, and God's patience ends; mercy refused long enough becomes the measure of judgment. And the empire under sentence is the one this book has watched war on mercy itself: the kingdom that made burial a crime is going, unburied, into history's grave. Tobit's sons are being taught to read the news theologically: never mistake an empire's present swagger for God's verdict, and never build your house inside one. History confirmed him within a generation: Nineveh fell in 612 BC, so completely that within centuries armies marched over its buried ruins without knowing a city was there.

**2.** Read Tobit 14:5. Tobit's hope for Jerusalem comes in stages: a temple rebuilt, but not like the former one, until the times of the age are completed, and only then the glorious building for all generations for ever. Why does this staging matter? What is the dying optimist refusing to claim?

#### ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Tobit refuses to claim that the next good thing will be the final good thing. He foresees a real but modest restoration (the Second Temple, history again obliging) and defers the glorious building to the completion of the age, hope with honest bookkeeping. This matters doctrinally and pastorally: biblical hope is staged, already and not yet, real down payments and a final settlement still outstanding, which is why the Church can celebrate genuine healings, conversions, and

reconciliations without pretending the eschaton has arrived, and can endure their absence without concluding it never will. Tobit dies mid-story and content, which is where every believer dies, and he is not cheated: the man who taught us to trust hidden providence trusts it past his own horizon. Keep this verse in hand; the final press will need it.

## The Prophecy You Are Sitting In

3. Read Tobit 14:6-7 aloud: then all the Gentiles will turn to fear the Lord God in truth, and will bury their idols. Now stop. Look around this room, slowly, at who is actually in it. What is the evidence status of this prophecy, and what does it have to do with the Magi of last week and with Matthew 28:19?

### ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Let the silence do the work first. A dying exile in Nineveh, in a book most Bibles omit, prophesied that the nations would turn to the God of Israel and bury their idols, and the room is the exhibit: a gathering of Gentiles, on a continent Tobit never imagined, fearing the Lord God in truth, their ancestral idols buried so long ago no one remembers their names, studying Israel's Scriptures on a weeknight for the love of Israel's Messiah. The line runs unbroken: Tobit 14:6 to Isaiah's streaming nations, to the Magi's down payment at Bethlehem, to the Great Commission (make disciples of all nations), to Thessalonians who turned to God from idols, to Ephesian magic books in the bonfire, to every baptism since, to these chairs. The study's last discovery is not in the text; it is the group: you are inside the book's final prophecy, its evidence and its next installment. Which raises the only remaining question, and the commissioning will ask it: installments of what, exactly, through you?

## The Harvest: Every Thread Resolved

4. Review, and the group does the work. Around the circle, resolve the study's threads from memory, the leader only referees. (a) The works of God: trace hidden to revealed to sung to...what, tonight? (b) Almsgiving as treasure: someone quote Anna's Session 2 question, then read Tobit 14:10-11, Ahikar's case, aloud, and pronounce the verdict. (c) The seed in the palace: recite Ahikar's four appearances. (d) Provision before need, prayer heard, and the sealed guess: one sentence each. Then everyone: the study's thesis, in one sentence of your own.

### ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The harvest, for the leader's back pocket: (a) The works of God were hidden through nine sessions of double vision, revealed by the angel (12:7, with John 9:3 confirming the pattern on the Lord's own lips), sung into doctrine in the hymn, and tonight commissioned: the revealing is now the group's job. (b) Anna asked, where are your charities and your righteous deeds? The book's answer took twelve chapters and two lives: Tobit's alms were tallied by heaven, attended by an angel, and delivered him; and Ahikar, the independent confirmation, gave alms and escaped the deathtrap which Nadab had set for him... consider what almsgiving accomplishes, and how righteousness delivers. Anna's question was never rebuked; it was answered, which is how God treats honest questions. (c) Ahikar: chapter 1 footnote, chapter 2 caretaker through the blind years, chapter 11 feast guest, chapter 14 closing doctrine, providence plants early, tends quietly, and files its proof at the end. (d) The fish stocked the cure before the diagnosis; both prayers were hand-carried the day they were prayed; and every opened guess in Session 8 measured the same gap: God out-imagines us. Theses will vary and should; the book's own candidate: God's providence works hidden inside ordinary lives, through prayer, mercy, and unnoticed companions, and is ordered, always, toward glorious revelation and praise.

### DIG DEEPER

Nineveh's fall (612 BC, to the Babylonians and Medes) has its own prophet: Nahum, whose entire book is the oracle Tobit's Jonah-citation stands in for: woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and booty. Nahum and Jonah make a matched set the Church reads together: the same city, spared in one book and sentenced in the other, because divine patience is real and not infinite. And there is a quiet mercy in Tobit's family history with that fall: the empire that punished Tobit for burying its victims was itself left as rubble, and the man's grandchildren heard the news and blessed God (14:15), not gloating, blessing, which is the only safe way to watch justice arrive.

## Build, Then Press: The Last Objection

### BUILD, THEN PRESS

#### The Survivorship Objection, Given at Full Strength

Save the strongest for last, because it is the one your group will meet for the rest of their lives: this was a lovely story because it is a selected story. For every Tobit healed, ten thousand exiles died blind; for every Sarah rescued, countless women were buried with their griefs unanswered. Scripture, says the objector, is a highlight reel: the tradition canonized the testimonies that worked out and called the pattern providence, which is survivorship bias with incense. Hindsight can always draw a beautiful arc through the data points that survived. The real test of a providence-doctrine is the stories that did not resolve, and about those, your book of Tobit is silent. Twelve weeks of threads resolving on schedule proves only that this is well-crafted literature, not that the universe keeps accounts.

5. Concede first: what is true in this? Then press its central factual claim about the Bible: is the canon actually a winners-only anthology? Send readers to Psalm 88's ending, and recall Job's living questions and Lamentations. Then bring the two decisive answers: what did Tobit 14:5 already refuse to claim, and what single event is Christian hope actually staked on, such that unresolved stories are awaiting rather than refuting? (Revelation 6:9-11 may be read.)

### ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Concede the true part: hindsight does tempt us to tidy arcs, testimonies do skew toward resolution, and Christians should be honest that many faithful lives end, on this side, with the prayer still at window level. Any providence-talk that quietly deletes those lives deserves the objection.

But press the factual claim, because it is false: the canon is not a winners' anthology. Psalm 88 is inspired Scripture and ends in the dark, thou hast caused lover and friend to shun me; my companions are in darkness, no rescue, no resolution, canonized anyway. Lamentations sits in the Bible as five chapters of a burned city's grief. Job's restoration never answers Job's questions; the whirlwind outranks them instead. Ecclesiastes was canonized saying vanity of vanities. And the Bible's own martyrs, under the altar in heaven itself, are still praying how long? and being told to rest a little longer (Revelation 6:9-11): Scripture canonizes the unresolved at the highest possible altitude. The tradition that chose Tobit also chose Psalm 88, which is not how survivorship bias curates. Tobit is in the canon not as the claim that every story resolves by chapter 14, but as the revealed assurance of what is true in every story, resolved or pending: prayers are carried, hidden obedience is witnessed, mercy is tallied. The book shows in one family, with the veil lifted, what Psalm 88 endures with the veil down, and the Church hands you both books because you will live both.

Then the two decisive answers. First, Tobit himself already refused the objection's target: 14:5 stages hope, real down payments now, the glorious completion only when the times of the age are completed, so the book on trial explicitly denies that all accounts settle in-story; its final

vindications are scheduled past every character's horizon, and Tobit dies mid-story, content, on trust. Second, and finally: Christian hope was never actually staked on the statistics of answered prayers. It is staked on one event, checkable, witnessed, and outside the pattern-matching of hindsight, that a man tortured to death under a Roman prefect was raised bodily on the third day. If that happened, and the apostles staked their lives on proclaiming that it did, several of them, on strong early evidence, sealing that testimony with their deaths, then the unresolved stories are not counter-evidence; they are unfinished, every Psalm 88 an account still open at a bank that has demonstrated it pays. The resurrection is God's answer to survivorship bias: he took the one story with the worst possible ending, the innocent man executed, the cup he asked to pass not removed but drunk in obedience, and yet he was heard (Hebrews 5:7), and resolved it in public, as the down payment on all the rest (1 Corinthians 15:20). We do not trust providence because the data all curve upward. We trust it because Easter happened, and because an angel, asked to explain twelve chapters of hidden mercy, gave the reason this study now hands to you: it is good to guard the secret of a king, but gloriously to reveal the works of God.

## The Commissioning · Write in a Book (14 minutes)

The angel's command has not expired: write in a book everything that has happened (12:20). Pens out. Five minutes of silence: each person writes one work of God from their own history, three to six sentences, in Tobit's grammar, God as the subject of the verbs. It can be a healing, a providence you only saw in hindsight, an Azariah, an opened guess, a descent-and-rising. Then, around the circle: each person reads theirs aloud. This is not sharing; this is the ancient act the whole book exists to teach, revealing the works of God, and the group's Amen after each one is a shared act of blessing and thanksgiving. Leader goes first.

## Send · Taking It Out the Door (8 minutes)

- S1.** Your page is now a document that exists. Who outside this room needs to hear it read, this month, and when will you do it?
- S2.** Twelve weeks ago you were handed a book you had never read. What is the one practice from it, the triad, the vigil, the alms, the couple's prayer, the honest lament, the retrospective gratitude, that you are carrying forward as a permanent part of your life? Say it aloud; the group is your witness.

## Live It · From Here On

- 1.** Read your written work of God to one person outside this group within the month. Witnesses multiply; teachers only inform.
- 2.** Reread the whole book of Tobit in one sitting sometime this month, forty minutes, with everything you now know. Watch the threads run. Then put the book where you will find it again in a dark season; it was written for exiles.
- 3.** Keep the rule of the triad, keep one shovel-work of mercy in your ordinary weeks, and when the hidden season comes, and it will, remember what the courier said: your prayers are carried, your burials are witnessed, and the secret has an expiration date.

### Closing Blessing

*Blessed are you, God who lives for ever: you afflicted us and showed us mercy, you walked beside us*

*unrecognized, you carried our prayers before your glory, and you have let us see, together, the works you do in secret. Send us now as Tobit sent his sons: out of every doomed Nineveh, toward the city with sapphire gates, giving alms on the way, burying the dead, telling the nations. And when our own last chapter comes, let us die as this book dies: blessing the Lord God for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Scripture Memory · Tobit 14:11 (RSV2CE)**

*"So now, my children, consider what almsgiving accomplishes, and how righteousness delivers."*

# Leader Reference Card

*Every passage in order of use*

**Q1** Tobit 14:1-4 · leave Nineveh; Jonah invoked

**Q2** Tobit 14:5 · staged hope; the times of the age

**Q3** Tobit 14:6-7 · the Gentiles turn; the room as evidence

**Q3 line** Matthew 28:19 · 1 Thessalonians 1:9 · Acts 19:19 · Revelation 7:9

**Q4 harvest** Tobit 14:10-11 · Ahikar's case; Anna's question answered

**Dig Deeper** Nahum 3:1 · Nineveh 612 BC · Tobit 14:15

**Steelman press** Psalm 88 · Lamentations · Revelation 6:9-11

**Steelman resolve** Tobit 14:5 · 1 Corinthians 15:20 · Tobit 12:7

**Commissioning** Tobit 12:20 · write in a book

**Memory** Tobit 14:11

**Catechism** CCC 849 · CCC 1010-1011 · CCC 1816 · CCC 2300 · CCC 2472