

## Not New or Improved - Explained

**Intro.** What do you think of when you see or read something is “new and improved”? The box must be different. The chips or cookies must be so much better, they put less in the package. Funny, but the price is the same or higher; so, we pay for *whatever* is new and improved. The people who heard the Lord’s teachings might have thought he was saying something brand new and improved. He wasn’t.

**I.** The teachings *sounded* different than the Commandments people learned at the temple. The Lord said you have heard, “You shall not...”; yes, they had heard that. Most believed they obeyed the laws of God and Moses. Then he explained the Commandments in a different way. The people understood them better and suddenly they applied to

everyone in the crowd, including his new disciples. Some people might have thought, “He’s not talking to *me*.” But he was. The Lord is talking to *everyone*. Anger can lead to violence, murder, hatred, racism and other -isms of our time. Lust is not only about sexual thoughts. It also applies to love of money and power. In the Old Testament, it also meant unfaithfulness to God by having other gods. Lying can lead to false testimony, gossip, and ruining a person’s reputation. Swearing, especially using the Lord’s name, dishonors God; also known as blasphemy. These common struggles are the reason we begin our worship of God with a penitential rite. In the silence of our hearts, we are asked to call to mind our sins. Together we admit our need of forgiveness before we bring our gift to the Lord’s altar. After all, what do we bring to the table:

*ourselves*. Jesus taught that interpersonal reconciliation was worth more than any material offering. [M. McGlone, *NCR*, 2/12/23] Walking into Mass without the preparation of realizing none of us is perfect, can lead to us finding no need of God or each other. Before the Word and Communion of life, we reconcile with God and each other.

**Concl.** The Lord wanted to be clear he wasn't changing or trashing Jewish traditions or laws. He was serious about "fulfilling" them. Knowing people, he might have figured some would innocently misunderstand or purposely misrepresent what he was teaching. He was right. It didn't take long for some of the leaders to plan to silence him. The Word of God is *never* new and improved. *We* can be new and improved. *We* can have more insight into the meaning of the Commandments. The

commandments he mentioned are to be followed. His focus was on what *caused* people to disobey the Commandments. Like the rich young man who told the Lord he had kept all the Commandments, most of us can say we have too. But few of us can say we have never been angry, lusted, lied or used swear words. All those lead to disrespect of God, of one another and awful deeds. In the gospel, the Lord said our practice of faith must be better than that of the scribes and pharisees of our time. He raised the standards for his followers. Examining our hearts using the basic, "You shall not..." is easy. Using the Lord's explanation of those same Commandments is a lot harder.

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