

Much is made in the United States about the Second Amendment to the Constitution. Many Christians know this is about firearms or guns. But how many Christians know what the first and second of the Ten Commandments are about? Further, how many Christians know how the principles embodied in the first and second commandments are applied in the New Testament for Christians in daily matters, such as whether or not nationalistic music is something that should be honored by Christians? Let's consider these important Bible principles now.



Should nationalistic music be honored by Christians?

“I am Yahweh your God... You shall have no other Gods to rival me.” (Exodus 20:2-3 NJB)

The scripture at face value seems clear enough.

“You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God.” (Exodus 20:4-5) The principles here teach us that idolatry in the form of other gods obviously can be literal objects, and often are. But we can also allow other gods, without there being a physical symbol of that god present, to “rival” Yahweh in our hearts, that is, deep within us.

“The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable - who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 CSB) We often deceive ourselves, without even realizing what we're doing.

The Bible makes clear that we can make virtually anything our god. For example:

“Their god is their appetite... and they think only about this life here on earth.”
(Philippians 3:19 NLT)

When nationalistic music is played, such as the national anthem in the United States, people are expected to stand in reverence or awe of the national symbol, such as a flag, which is usually prominently displayed for all to see. Often a nationalistic song is sung to the accompaniment of the nationalistic music. People in the nation are often told how great the nation is, and how God is on their side and always has been. They are fed a very slanted, highly biased, account of the nation's history, which is sanitized of all unflattering facts. This brainwashing from childhood on causes a nationalistic fervor in many people and can become very emotional when nationalistic music is played. This indoctrination can make it very difficult to modify one's viewpoint, because the emotions run so deep. For example, in the United States, the national anthem is often played just prior to a public event, such as sporting event, serving as a pious hymn to turn the entire spectacle into a quasi-nationalistic religious ceremony.

Jesus embodied the first two commandments when he said: **“You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38 NLT)** How does this apply to nationalistic music? Nationalism demands that national idols be praised, honored and revered at all costs.

“Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey?”
(Romans 6:16 NLT)

When we robotically sing in reverence at the playing of the national anthem – this is exactly what we are doing!

Is the Bible teaching disrespect or disobedience to national laws? Absolutely not! Christians are obligated to obey **Romans 13:1-7: “Everyone must submit to governing authorities ... Pay your taxes and government fees... and give respect and honor to**

those in authority.” (NLT)

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority”—1 Peter 2:13

NIV. Christians should be exemplary model citizens in obedience to governmental laws and paying taxes (**Romans 13:1-7**). However, there is one caveat principle that Christians must always keep in mind. **“Obedience to God comes before obedience to men” (Acts 5:29 NJB).** **“We must obey God rather than any human authority.” (Acts 5:29 NLT)**

Any law, or any pressure to conform to what others want us to do, must be disobeyed if it violates God’s standards, such as expressed by the first and second commandments, which are enforced on Christians by what Jesus called the greatest commandment at **Matthew 22:37-39**. Christians must balance their submission to human authorities with the principle to obey God’s law as top priority.

Even if a flag is not displayed when nationalistic music is played, such as a national anthem, it doesn’t matter. In reality, it is the nation itself which is being idolized. Christians who wish to **“obey [Jesus’] commandments” (John 14:15)** are respectful, but are not mesmerized by the playing of nationalistic music. Neither do they have to “copy the behavior and customs of this world” by showing deference to a nationalistic idol. They can show that they have **“let God transform [them] into a new person by changing the way [they] think.” (Romans 12:2 NLT)**

We have an outstanding precedent set for us in the Bible at **Daniel 3**.

“Then a herald shouted out, ‘People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king’s command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.’ So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and

worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.” (Daniel 3:4-7 NLT)

Their actions of respectful behavior with non-compliance were in complete harmony with the principles discussed herein. We are assured of this by God’s miraculous deliverance of them from the death penalty. One takeaway we can glean from this is that nationalistic music played, and action on our part which would show we are in agreement with idolizing a nation or nationalistic symbols, would constitute idolatry. Obedient Christians cannot just “go with the flow,” even if they stand out like “sore thumbs” and become unpopular.