

The one true music collection

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Caldwell's current *Living by the Word* column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

This week's texts make me think about interfaith dialogue, and interfaith dialogue makes me think of a conversation with my friend Ali. We were trying to reconcile the fact that each of our religions--or at least some segments of each of our religions--claims that the other's religion is flat out wrong.

"Here's how I see it," Ali said. "Your religion is like your music collection. Of course you think your music collection is the best in the world. If you don't, then why are you listening to that crap? It's time to get some new music.

"But if you do, then you have to understand that I think the same thing about mine. And of course we're both right, so if we're smart, we'll accept when one of us offers the other our headphones and says, 'Listen to how awesome this is.'"

The metaphor's not perfect: My music collection doesn't claim to be the one true music collection. Then again, I don't believe Christianity needs to make that claim, either.

The metaphor does allow me to do two things I very much want to do: be unapologetic about thinking my religion is the best--otherwise, why am I listening to that crap?--and yet be humble about the fact that others feel the same way about their own traditions.

Some will grind their teeth at this namby-pamby relativism. "Only one of two opposing truth claims can actually be true!" they'll claim. "Which

one is it: yours or Ali's?"

To which I respectfully reply: I actually don't care. I'm happy to wait till I die or till the end of time or whatever to find out. In the meanwhile, it seems like everybody and their brother is in some sort of war about Truth, and I don't want any part of it.

I just want to hang out with Ali. Who really does have some awesome music on his iPod.