



HEART TO HEART TO HEART

(Part One)

Last Sunday at NCFE, we wrapped up our teaching series on the fascinating tale of Queen **Esther** by completing our study in the Old Testament book that bears her regal name. As her account began, we saw that Esther was a young woman who, though Jewish, had little time or use for God. She was a follower of God in name only, not in truth. But things began to change for Esther as she matured, faced the inevitable challenges of life, and recognized the folly of trying to “make it” on her own. She came to realize that there was too much at stake to “do life” without letting the Lord lead the way. By the end of her story, Esther is right where she needs to be, *following the one true God* and pointing others to do so as well. Five hundred years later, **Jesus** showed up on the scene, proclaimed Himself to be that same, one true God, and said to all who will hear, “*Follow Me*.” In a couple of weeks, NCFE will begin a new set of messages through the New Testament book of Ephesians. But before we do, this Sunday and next, I want to share from *my heart to your heart* what I think is on *God’s heart* for NCFE. We’re going to ponder what these words of Jesus (“*Follow Me*”) mean for us, living in our own turbulent times. It is a simple phrase with profound impact. As with Esther, there is too much at stake for you, and for me, to miss what Jesus is calling us to do and offering us in return.

SIZING UP OUR TIMES

(2 Timothy 3:1,13, Matthew 24:24, Hosea 4:6)

RESPONDING TO OUR TURBULENT TIMES

1. (1 John 4:4) Don’t give in ...
2. (Romans 3:10) But be real about ...
3. (Psalms 119:105) Pick-up the Bible and ...
4. (Matthew 4:19) Adjust your living to ...

FOLLOWING JESUS IN OUR TIMES ...

BIG LIFE LESSONS

1. (Mark 1:16-20) Is the end of ...
2. (Mark 1:21-22) Is realizing that what Jesus says ...
3. (Mark 1:27) Opens our eyes to ...
4. (Matthew 9:9) Takes us away from ...
5. (Luke 9:59-60) Forces us to sort out our ...
6. (Luke 9:23) Means you’re going to carry ...
7. (John 10:27-28; 12:26) Produces rewards far beyond ...

TODAY’S TAKEAWAYS ...

LISTEN ...

LOOK ...

LEARN ...

FOR THOUGHT & TALK

In your small group take 5-10 minutes to review the main points of this week’s message. Discuss the following questions, taking your time as the Spirit leads, realizing you don’t have to cover them all.

1. As you begin your small group gathering, please start by praying for the families of the slain, and the soul of this nation. Then, after prayer, discuss ... Why is this tragedy, first and foremost, a spiritual issue? What does this horrific event tell us about the need for churches (like NCFE) to step-up, proclaim the Gospel and show the world the difference following Jesus can make?
2. Can you sense the despair that is gripping our culture as evil proliferates? How have you seen people demonstrate their cynicism as they express their doubts that anything can or will change? When we consider the sinful turbulence of our time, how easy is it for us, *even as Christians*, to feel overwhelmed by evil and succumb to hopelessness? Review the truth of 1 John 4:4 – *Child, you belong to God, and greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*. As you ponder the truth of this verse, what do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
3. PJ shared seven Biblical truths about what it means to *follow Jesus*. Take a few minutes and put each one of those truths into your own words. Share with the group your own personal wording and have some fun comparing the different ways each of you individually phrased each statement. Now, share which one of the seven teaching points, about following Jesus, most spoke to you and why.
4. Next week, PJ is going to share some very practical lifestyle habits that those who follow Jesus will practice on a daily and weekly basis. As you think ahead, what do you think some of those spiritual disciplines (habits of holiness; Christ-like conduct) would be that distinguish someone as a faithful follower of Jesus?