



Coffeeville First Baptist Church
By **Craig Baker, Pastor**

As you know, this coming Saturday is Valentine's Day, the day each year that is devoted to love. I think it is good that we have a day to remind us to show our loved ones how much we care, but like most holidays, Valentine's Day has become commercialized and proving our love to others has been reduced to giving elaborate and expensive gifts.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 tell us what real love is all about. In those verses we are told real love is patience, kindness, humility, selflessness, compassion, grace, mercy, encouragement, trust, hope, and endurance. These are things we should be giving our loved ones each and every day, but God does not just tell us what love is, He gave us an example to follow. In Ephesians 5:1-2 we are told, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

Jesus' love for us is the ultimate example of not only how we should love one another but also how we should love the church. Now let me be clear. I am not talking about loving a church building or the church programs like so many of us are guilty of doing. If you love Jesus then you will also love His people, the church, and do everything

you can to make sure the church is strengthened, nurtured, and built up. The question is, "Do you love the church?" If you say, "Yes," then your actions and your words should prove it.

Suppose you told your spouse that you love them but never spent time with them, never did anything for them, and were always talking bad about them, would they think you really love them? Of course not, they would think you are a liar. If you really love them, you will make them a priority in your life, so why is it that so many say they are believers and love Jesus but care nothing about His church?

Loving the church is more than just warming a spot on the pew every Sunday so you can check your attendance off your weekly list of things to do. There is an expectation that as a believer you will be pursuing God and taking advantage of every opportunity you have to gather with God's people, fellow believers, to be encouraged, built-up, and grow in your faith, so that when the persuasions and temptations of this world come you will not be overtaken and drawn away from following Jesus. If you love Jesus, you will love His church, and your actions will prove it. If you love Jesus, you will love His church, and your words will also prove it.

Unfortunately, I have heard many church folks, even pastors, say some terrible things about the

church, particularly the local church they attend or lead. They talk so bad about their church you just want to say, "If you hate it that much why don't you leave?" Sadly, many good churches have been damaged and even destroyed by the grumbling, back-biting, and gossiping of its own people. These people abuse the church with their words. Imagine for a moment how your church would look if big buckets of mud were thrown on the outside walls every time someone said something negative about it. Can you picture the outside of the church covered in filth from top to bottom? Now imagine what people who came by and saw that would think. What would that say to them about the people who worship here? More importantly what would that say to them about the Jesus the people there claim to love and follow?

After they saw all the filth that had been thrown all over the church you probably could not pay those people to come be a part of that church. Well, that is essentially what happens every time we say something negative about the church. You are just throwing another bucket of mud on the walls. That should never happen in a body of believers who really love Jesus.

Three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me," and each time Peter answered, "Yes," and Jesus drove home how important it was for those who love Him to feed, nurture and care for His sheep, the church.

Besides wool and meat, what do sheep produce when they are fed, nurtured, and cared for? They make more sheep. That is how the flock grows and is built up. We feed, nurture, (Cont'd. on page 18)

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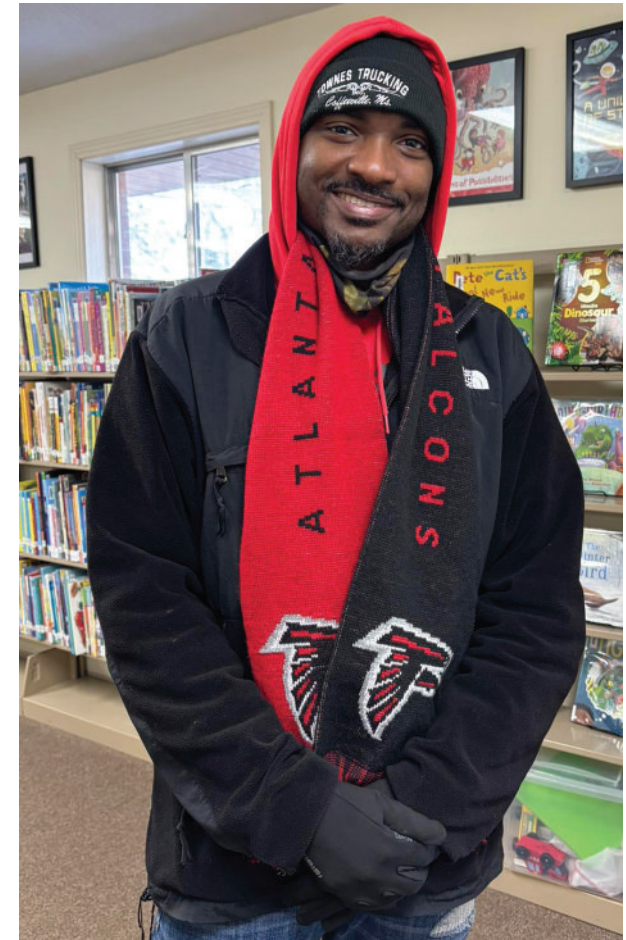
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FREE TREES

TO BE GIVEN AWAY

FEBRUARY 19, 2026
STARTING AT 9 A.M.

114 Front Street
Coffeeville, MS

Persimmon seedlings will be given away.

Location:
USDA Service Center
114 Front Street
Coffeeville, MS 38922

For more information contact the Yalobusha County Soil & Water Conservation District at
662-675-8000 ext. 3