

In the House

Tim Howell loved to take his grandchildren to eat at Waffle House. It was one of many ways in which Tim would create special opportunities to make memories with the people that he loved.

As “Papa” (what the grandchildren called him) took them to Waffle House to eat breakfast, the grandchildren would learn more about Papa and how to love other people.

Lincoln, a grandson, reflected on his visits to Waffle House with Papa: “When I was young my Papa would take me to the Waffle House on Hillcrest and Grelot in Mobile. He knew every person working there and most of their life’s stories. I observed him many times listening intently to the cooks’, waiters’, and waitresses’ problems that I was too young to understand. Problems of broken marriages, bad financial situations, and difficult life decisions.

At the time, I think I understood somewhat of the abnormality that it was for him to listen and genuinely care about their troubles. However, it was not until I was an adult that I began to understand the profound impact that his compassion had on the people he met. Whether it was teaching driving to impaired people, driving a bus for church, helping someone on the side of the road, or helping people who had been injured automobile accidents, he never met a stranger and touched people’s lives in a way that many of us will never know.

Memories like those are what I take with me throughout my daily life. His compassion, genuine caring, and empathy for other people from all walks of life made a profound impact on my life. These are the qualities that I try to take with me every day of my life.”

Tim’s compassion and caring for others reflect the love and compassion that Jesus had for people. When Jesus “saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36 ESV).

Because Jesus cared so much about people (including you and me), He addressed our greatest need: salvation from sin. It cost Him His life. Jesus died on the cross for our sins so that we can be forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

“This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God’s love for us. He sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins” (1 John 4:10 NCV).

God will save from sin and give eternal life to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from sin in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He will continue to cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7-9).

Those who are impacted by the life and love of Jesus will also have a heart for people. They will care about others and seek to help them.

Tim Howell did. He was a Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:25-37). Let us “go and do likewise.”

-- David A. Sargent

* In loving memory of Tim “Papa” Howell (June 17, 1950 – August 15, 2026). Until we meet again.