This is the last message of our Summer Series, “Life Lessons from Proverbs through Disney’s Magic.” It has been a great journey of learning using moments from Disney films to illustrate life lessons from Proverbs, exploring themes like wisdom, justice, friendship, diligence, humility, honesty, and more. Today, as we conclude this series, the theme is “Loving Perseverance.”

By “Loving Perseverance,” I mean the sustained effort driven by love, fueled by faith, and refined by our trials. It is a commitment made out of love to do what is right when faced with situations when it is easier to give up than to push through.

The apostle Paul puts love and perseverance together when he said in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7,

“**Love** is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, **always perseveres**.”

Paul was encouraging the early Christians to be guided by love as opposed to skills or giftedness. He emphasized this to teach that love is the essence of the Gospel of Jesus when he said in the previous verses, “Without love, I am nothing and gain nothing, even if I can speak like an angel” (paraphrased). For Paul, love wins because it “always perseveres.”

Think of it this way: Have you ever faced a situation where love felt more like a luxury that you couldn’t afford, yet you kept going because your love was greater than your fears, challenges, or needs? That is Loving Perseverance.

With this in mind, I want you to pause for a moment. Think of a time when you experienced “Loving Perseverance” in your life. Who stood by you when the going got tough? Who went looking after you when you were lost? Hold that thought as we explore deeper into what this essential quality really means.

Our text today from the Book of Proverbs is Proverbs 17:17, which beautifully encapsulates the notion of “Loving Perseverance” when it states, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

The word perseverance is not particularly mentioned or highlighted in the book of Proverbs. However, perseverance is often framed as a virtue closely tied to diligence, hard work, and steadfastness. And here, we also see it through love. Just as the apostle Paul talks about love always persevering, Proverbs portrays Love not as a fleeting emotion but as a steadfast commitment, especially when times are hard. It suggests that real love—whether it’s God’s love for us, our love for God, or our love for each other—does not waver in the face of adversity. It emphasizes that true love and friendship are not conditional or limited to favorable circumstances. Instead, they persist “at all times,” including during hardships and challenges. This is why love and perseverance go hand-in-hand.

For example, the mention of “a brother is born for adversity” serves to underscore the idea that enduring relationships are built and strengthened through trials. This teaches us that love, whether it is between friends or family, isn’t just a fair-weather commitment. It is an enduring promise to stand by each other, demonstrating a form of loving perseverance that sustains us through the ups and downs of life.

This Proverbial wisdom is not just ancient text; it is something I have lived as a father. As a dad, I can tell you that I know this kind of love and perseverance. My children sometimes struggle to practice their musical instruments or work on a school assignment. The easy route for me is to let them face the struggle alone, but love propels me without a second thought to sit next to them and help them figure out what to do, encouraging and believing in them—even when they don’t believe in themselves. That is one example of loving perseverance. It is the love that rolls up its sleeves and says, “I’m here for you always, no matter what.”

For this and many other reasons, I believe the love between parents and children is one of the most potent embodiments of loving perseverance. This love is unconditional and constant regardless of a child’s behavior or choices. Granted, there are times when the love is hardly felt due to “stressors,” but it is still there.

A story that illustrates this perfectly is Disney’s “Finding Nemo.” The movie “Finding Nemo” gives us a powerful example of this love. In this movie, we witness Marlin, the overly cautious clownfish father, embark on an extraordinary journey to find his missing son, Nemo. Marlin faces every imaginable danger, from sharks to deep-sea trenches, and even wrestles with his fears and insecurities. However, his unyielding love for Nemo propels him forward against all odds. His love is the kind that stops at nothing, crosses every barrier, and takes every risk, mirroring the essence of Proverbs 17:17. Just like the verse suggests, Marlin loves “at all times,” especially in the face of adversity.

For those of you who have seen the movie, you will remember the unforgettable moments of Marlin’s loving perseverance. If you have not seen it, now it will be spoiled for you. Here are a couple of moments from the movie that speak of this loving perseverance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=Ycmp6K1KPLo>

In this video, we learned about Marlin’s loving perseverance. He had become a legend of the sea (or ocean) and was well-known for his relentless search for his son, Nemo. He fought sharks and journeyed across the ocean, driven by a love that knows no bounds. So, after overcoming countless obstacles and facing his deepest fears, Marlin’s love finally leads him to his son. Here is when this happens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=hqv9EkrZwbM>

Marlin found his beloved son, Nemo! Marlin’s relentless quest to find Nemo was fueled by a love that stopped at nothing. This type of love doesn’t just sit around and hope for the best; it goes out and takes action.

You see, loving perseverance isn’t just a concept or a teaching; it is an action, a continuous series of actions propelled by the deepest affections of our hearts. It drives a parent to keep looking for a lost child, keeps friends together through thick and thin, and fortifies our faith through trials.

Can you think of a specific moment where love propelled you to take an action you wouldn’t have otherwise? Are there any relationships in your life that need a boost of loving perseverance right now?

Now, Marlin’s love for Nemo mirrors a greater love, a divine love, that we all have experienced or can experience. What is this love? We see it profoundly embodied in the love of God our Father has for us and the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf.

The apostle John described this love in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus spoke these words to a man named Nicodemus, who was seeking understanding about who he (Jesus) was, and Jesus told him he was the one sent by God to save the world. This was a revelation about God’s love because it was not just expressed in words or feelings; it was an action that involved unimaginable sacrifice and perseverance. God’s love for us is not half-hearted or conditional; it is a love that endures “at all times,” echoing the wisdom we find in Proverbs 17:17.

Likewise, Jesus exemplified loving perseverance through his life, teachings, and especially his journey to the cross. Consider how, in the Garden of Gethsemane, confronted by the weight of what was to come, Jesus prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Despite his apprehension, Jesus did not give up on us but pressed on, fueled by his love for humanity and obedience to the Father. Jesus is the one that goes after every one to find them so they would not be lost any longer. As Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Why does this matter? When we know we are loved in such a manner, “at all times,” with a love that embodies loving perseverance, something transformative happens within us. It gives us an irreplaceable sense of security, worth, and belonging. It uplifts us, heals us, and draws us closer to our divine purpose. When someone loves us like Marlin loves Nemo, or more importantly, as our Heavenly Father loves us, it instills in us the courage to face life’s challenges, knowing we are not alone, and inspires us to extend the same steadfast love to others.

So, this matters because this type of love not only reassures us in times of doubt and struggle but also emboldens us to take risks, forgive, hope, and persevere, no matter what life throws our way. Secure in such love, we are more resilient, compassionate, and fully ourselves.

Did you know that God loves you “at all times” with infinite perseverance and there is nothing you can do about it? You are never alone or lost if you realize that God is there with you.

As we conclude this series today, let’s turn our understanding of “Loving Perseverance” into action too. For this, here is a challenge for all of us: Identify areas in your life that need loving perseverance. Who are the ‘Nemos’ you need to search for? What are the obstacles you have allowed to deter you? Love isn’t passive but a vigorous, dynamic force that perseveres against all challenges.

And most importantly, remember that this love isn’t something we have to muster up ourselves; it flows from God to and through us. Just as Proverbs 17:17 says that a friend loves at all times, we are endlessly loved by God, who strengthens us to extend that love to others.

Here is the invitation and good news: Let’s go about this life as hearers and as doers, armed with a love that not only endures but acts, that not only perseveres but triumphs. And the good news is that with God as our guide, there is no challenge too great, no hurdle too high, and no ocean too vast for love to conquer.

I am grateful for this transformative summer journey. I hope and pray that the lessons we have gleaned together will take root and bear fruit in your lives.