

9th Commandment: Fiction

Let's pray. Dear Lord, sin has crept in and we are corrupt and we believe lies, we deceive ourselves as to who You are, we turn from You instead of seeking after You. Even when we are saved Lord, we wrestle with the old man, wrestle with the man whose father is the father of lies. Again, it's the new Spirit whose Father is truth. Lord, we pray that You make us a people of truth, a people who delight in the truth, who seek the truth, and who look for Your truth and not turn aside to the ways of the world. Lord, as we consider fiction tonight, guide us to Your truth and Your right understanding of this matter. We ask this in Your Son's name, amen.

The last subject I want to consider before we leave the ninth commandment is the subject of fiction. Even as I start I realize this is a controversial subject even inside this church, but as we've been going through Acts and hearing that Paul didn't hold back anything that was helpful for the people in Ephesus, that's what his requirement was, to teach the whole counsel of God. I feel like I have the same responsibility here. It doesn't mean that everybody needs to agree with me, that doesn't mean that it's the only possible viewpoint, but I do feel very strongly that this is what the Scriptures teach. I think it's an important subject and I'm going to end with some of the effects that I think the embracing of fiction has had on our culture and on our country and on the church. That doesn't mean that there can't be other arguments, that doesn't mean it can't be discussed, it doesn't mean people can't have other viewpoints, but I think it's important for people to realize that I have a strong opinion on this because I have considered it quite a bit and I see the damage that fiction has done. I even can look back with how I raised my children and I have serious regrets and my most serious regrets are how I used fiction in the raising of my children. The first point I want to make is that my position was probably never the majority position, but it used to be a very common position in the church. People like Dabney wrote about the shifting of morals that came from embracing fiction. "As it is always my wish to attain directness and practical utility in what I have to say, I will explain that, under the name of dangerous books, I mean now to attack particularly the usual kinds of fictitious narratives, novels, impure sentimental poetry, and biographies, whether accurate or not, of criminal and degraded characters." He wrote in an era, this is 1860-1870, where fiction was gaining hold in the church, and he is saying that he is seeing the destruction of a culture that has embraced fiction. At the beginning of the 19th century, ten percent of books sold were fiction, by the end of the 19th century, ninety percent of the books sold were fiction. He's writing in the midst of a culture that is being overturned by fiction. This is a dramatic shift. Ian Murray has a good book called the *Undercover Revolution* and he makes some great points in there, and he also has some errors in there, but he talks about how men deliberately used fiction to undermine people's view of the world and shift the direction of the church. They were closet atheists and they wanted people to reject God. The writers that you've heard of, Robert Lewis Stephenson for example, his goal for example was to destroy the church. This isn't just people that wandered out and they're just trying to make a buck, there're lots of people in the 20th century just wandering around trying to make a buck. The people who were actually trying to introduce and further fiction, they were doing it as an attack on the church of Jesus Christ. It's important

for us to understand that because before we embrace something that was an attack, we should be really careful. If the people that were pushing it and causing the expansion of it are people who hate the church, we should start with the question, 'Why were they using this means? Was it a righteous means?' Those who hate the church don't usually use righteous means. So again, I'd recommend the book called *The Undercover Revolution*. He does have some errors in there, but it's a good scanning of what happened in the 19th century so that we're in a very different place today. Why I'm talking about this subject is because I think that we see the effects of fiction all around us in the world. There used to be an expectation that people can understand basic logic, but now there is no expectation that people understand basic logic. I think this is produced by a steady diet of fiction because fiction is illogical. It's really impossible to create a structure that everything is internally consistent and makes sense. That's one of the ways that you tell a false theology, you can point out inconsistencies that prove it's false because God is true and there are no inconsistencies in Him, there is no shadow or turning. We get to the point where people can't understand basic logic because they've been taught to just accept the story because if you think too logically about it, it falls apart and doesn't make any sense. What that teaches people to do, it teaches your children to do when you embrace fiction, is it teaches them to think illogically instead of critically. It used to be that people had to do real things like working on a farm instead of sitting behind a computer screen where everything seems so abstract and they get a better sense of logic and reality when they're actually out there behind an ox pulling a plow. Now, especially when so many people aren't doing those physical things, we need to be very careful that we don't introduce a structure in their mind that they can just make it up and not think critically about it. If you go onto the internet and you go onto websites that are news websites, there's a reason why Donald Trump calls it 'fake news'. A lot of it is fake, and if you sit back and think about it rationally you realize it doesn't make sense. We're so used to fiction and these stories that are shallow and have no real depth that we start to buy and accept things that we should never accept. The constant diet of fiction, the constant errors that it has compared to reality, this causes people to think that the real world is the same way as those fictional books that they're reading. For example, you read things right now, and one of the big things that's been talked about in the past nine months, is all these people saying Artificial Intelligence is going to take over the world. We're going to make robots and computers and the computers are going to kill off all the humans. This doesn't rise to the level of Bugs Bunny logic, this is cartoon logic on the extreme. Guess what? A computer doesn't work that way, they don't, but yet who says that they do? Elon Musk, the guy who does Tesla, he came out and said computers are going to take over the world. This is absurd, it's childish, but people are all panicked. Stephen Hawking, he said the greatest threats to mankind are computers and artificial intelligence. You know what one of the "Fathers of AI" says? Scratch the whole thing, none of it works, throw it away, we haven't even started on anything that can be considered artificial intelligence because they haven't. All they have is something that can process information quickly. Not even in the remotest aspect could a computer be called artificial intelligence, but you have these men who are considered the smartest and most scientific men and they fall for Bugs Bunny logic. This is from the diet of fiction that as a culture we have embraced. So let me say why I'm talking about fiction when I talk about the ninth commandment. I think because it is inherently bearing false witness. It's primarily a ninth commandment argument, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." If it's wrong to bear false witness against your

neighbor, it is wrong to bear false witness against God. It's really that simple. I would argue that fiction is either vanity or it is bearing false witness against God. Let's talk first about the vain forms of fiction. The vain parts of fiction are those that say there is no God, who reject it and say there's a world out there and they create their own thing and they play God. They make up a world that is nothing like our world, where everything is different and there are no rules. This is clearly someone who is saying they are the god of that world and they will determine what is good and what is evil. Clearly the author of that is saying this is the world that God should have made, this is the world that would have been more interesting, this is the world that you should escape to, from the world that God made. God never encourages us to escape from the world, He never encourages us to. Instead He commands us to take every thought captive to Christ in this world. Those who want a different world, what are they doing? By going to that world where Christ doesn't exist, are they taking every thought captive to Christ? Obviously not. The fiction that are these fantasy worlds, they have nothing to do with Christ, they can't have anything to do with Christ. There's no Christ there. When we think about fiction, that knocks out a whole section of it because it's not about Christ. We're here for a purpose, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink is for the glory of God. Reading a book like that is not for the glory of God. It's for the glory of the author, for the glory of his imagination. It's for the idolatry by which many authors that are famous are treated. Look at J.K. Rowling who wrote Harry Potter, look at how she is treated in England, as if she is this tremendous person. She wrote some lousy books for thirteen year olds. She created this picture that is so engaging that people want that picture rather than the real world. We went to the castle that they used to film the movie in Scotland and the people there said we must have been there because of Harry Potter. We said of course not, we are here because there is real history that took place here. She's the star because she's created a world that people want more than the world God created. Do you see that as inherently sinful? That is inherently rejecting God? God created one world that we live in and we're supposed to have our focus on this world. The church of Jesus Christ is to be a keeper at home. To create and write these fantasy novels is against that. God has said to take dominion over this world and you don't take dominion of this world by making up another one. God has given us clear commands. When we do vain things that exalt men, it puts him in the position where he is playing God. Genesis 3:4-6, "Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." This is what it means to play God, it's to be the one who says this is good and this is evil. When she looks at the fruit that God said was evil, what does she say? This is good. He said it's not good for food, she said it is good for food. To play God is to say that you have the authority to say what is good and what is evil. That is to pretend like you're God. Everybody that writes a book where they create a world, who defines what good and evil is? That author does, they say these are the rules in that world, here's how that world will be, here are the morals and ethics in that world. This is inherently putting yourself in the place of God. So the people who want to make up this new world, they are playing God. we should not want a different God. We should expect fiction to be wildly popular because people want to deceive themselves in their own unrighteousness. The whole world testifies to who God is so what do they want if they reject that God? They want a different world. Why do

you think people go to these superhero movies? They don't want the God of this world so they want a different world who has a different God, not a God who says they will go to hell. This is the reality and why fiction is so popular. It is because it is inherently rejecting God so those who reject God love fiction. Brothers, that doesn't mean that those who do love God should embrace fiction. Fiction is still the same, it's putting someone in the place of God. Literally in that book or movie the author is playing God, the director is playing God. He is saying this is good and this is evil. Because of the difficulty in making a set of rules that is consistent, they will usually borrow a whole lot from the true God, but they won't borrow everything from the true God. They have to come pretty close to what the true God says is right or wrong otherwise people won't accept it and it will put them off because it will be so perverse. You can work people up to this, that's what the westerns did. The westerns in the 50's and 60's had a hero and then they came up with the anti-hero who rejected the law and he was the hero and the star. This was intentionally trying to throw the laws of God on their head. I want to give a specific example where people keep most of the rules, but then they just twist a few. Last year, maybe two years ago now, the Supreme Court passed Obergefell, which said two men can marry. That's fiction by the way, two men can't marry. God said marriage is between a man and woman, the two become one flesh. That's what God spoke, it doesn't matter what the Supreme Court said. As a nation we have embraced the fiction that two men can marry so something like sixty percent of the population say it's okay for two men to marry instead of having the logic to say that it's not true. That's more cartoon logic. If you think about it, back in the early 70's you had Archie Bunker and who is one of the groups Archie Bunker made fun of? They made good and evil and they said Archie Bunker was evil because he was a racist, he was rude to people, he was mean and he also hated sodomites. They keep most of the laws of God, but they take it and they shift it a little bit and then you have a series of television shows, Three's Company, Bosom Buddies until it ends with Will and Grace where they keep creating a world where sodomy is acceptable even though they keep most of the other rules. Then it gets embraced by our culture to the point where the Supreme Court says sodomy is fine people don't say it's evil. They created a different god, they played a different god who changed the rules of morality so people would accept it. If instead of fictionalizing sodomy, if you actually show what it was like to be a sodomite, if you actually show the health problems, if you actually show that the average sodomite has a thirty year less lifespan than the average heterosexual, if you actually showed the level of drug problems and every problem that's in the homosexual community, people wouldn't have embraced it. They would have said the Supreme Court justices were insane, but instead they embrace it. Understand the reason they embraced it is because of fiction, because they had to fictionalize what was going on instead of actually demonstrating what the truth was. Fiction is a powerful tool to deceive and to mislead people. Christian, if what you're doing is embracing fiction all the time, understand it's not neutral. Understand the people writing it are not neutral. It didn't just happen that over a forty year span that they keep making the gay character more and more acceptable. That didn't happen just automatically, that was deliberate, they had an agenda and they moved that agenda along. That's what Ian Murray's book is about in the 19th century concerning what was happening in the 19th century. Don't think it stopped, that the people who started to write fiction aren't playing God, don't think they are in a place to determine good and evil. That's what the authors think they are, whether it's in books or movies. So those are the vain ones, let's talk about the ones that just openly bear false witness about God. How about

the books that are teaching Christian values through the use of fiction? Can that be wrong? The answer is yes, that can be wrong. God is very complex, He is infinite in His understanding, He is infinite in His wisdom. The person who tries to boil that down to make it simple will always distort who God is. Whoever tries to write in a way that glorifies God starts with one major problem, it is a rejection of the sufficiency of Scripture. Like the Lamplighter books that are very popular among homeschoolers. They say that they are the means to teach your children character and morals. You read these moral tales by these Lamplighter authors that they found from a hundred years ago and your children will learn morality. How does the Bible say your children are to learn morality? 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." How are you children to learn how they are to behave? Not by reading a Lamplighter book. They don't need those. To think that fiction is needed is to reject the fact that Scripture is sufficient to teach all of those things. People say those fiction books will teach, but let me tell you the Scripture teaches it much better because the Scripture teaches it in line with God's revelation and not in line with what the authors think God does. Another problem is that God in His wisdom, resolves issues sometimes over a seven hundred and fifty year period. What happens in every book or movie? In a movie they get results in two hours, a book gets results in maybe five hundred pages. Granted, most people don't read five hundred pages, most are one to two hundred pages. They think every issue needs to be resolved. When God reveals to Isaiah what's going to happen to Israel, when does that get resolved? Seven hundred and fifty years. That's why Jesus Christ can quote Isaiah and says this is the fulfillment that's happening now. Whenever man tries to boil God down, he has to lose things, he has to lose the complexity of God, he has to lose the richness of God's wisdom. No way can you paint the longsuffering of God in a book of fiction. How many times through Scripture does it say God is longsuffering? In every fiction book it wants to resolve things, but guess what? That's the opposite of being long-suffering. God is longsuffering, seven hundred and fifty years is the picture of longsuffering. For that you have to go to truth and not go to fiction. Because of the finite nature of man, when man plays God, the nature of God gets distorted and narrow because man is not wise enough, man is not complex enough, man does not have enough knowledge to ever play God because his understanding is so minor compared to the understanding that God has. Another problem is having the depth of knowledge of a situation. In fiction, there is always shallowness of knowledge, meaning that the characters are not well developed. Think about what God knows about you and what the Scriptures say God knows about you, He has the hairs on your head numbered, He knows our days, He knows every step we take, He knows all about us. When you read a book of fiction they tell you enough so that you get a glimmer of the person, a glimmer of the character, never enough to really know them like God knows anybody, and then they make things happen to him. The reality is that God makes decisions on far deeper knowledge than what the fiction writer pretends. So much of it has to be made up, so much of it has to be that this is what God would do, but there aren't even the tiny details and God actually cares about the details. He can have two people, two Christians in the same situation if you look externally and one of them He will bless and one of them He will curse. Why will He bless one and curse one? Because maybe one heard a sermon on the matter and the other didn't and He will say to him who knows what is right and doesn't do it is sinning and will put a curse on him. The other person because he is

doing it by faith, their faith is honoring to God and God will bless him for his faith. God is far more complicated, you can't condense God into a book. You can't make a world with a god unless he is incredibly shallow. Whenever we take God and we try to make Him shallow enough to fit into a book we are bearing false witness. To quote Dabney again, "The ignorant stonecutter, looking at some model of classic beauty from a master's chisel, may imagine that surely he could make a statue like that, so utterly free from exaggeration and point, so exactly like a real man or woman. But his idea only shows his utter ignorance of the sculptor's art. He dreams not that the harmony and truth to nature, the absence of exaggeration, and the softened unity and propriety of the statue are just the qualities which it is most difficult to produce—just the qualities which the master alone can produce." The reality is the person who can think they can make up a world thinks they can even describe a story that happened or that they put into the context of the real world, the reality is they don't know enough about people and the world and God to ever do that with accuracy. Because they're not doing it with accuracy, it is inherently bearing false witness of who God is. To accurately reflect what an infinite God would do is a task that is beyond mortals, it requires more knowledge and understanding than any mortal possesses. We are all the ignorant stonecutter, none of us can create the masterpiece God created when He made man. None of us can, no author can and since they can't what it means that they have to do instead is they have to deceive. They have no ability to do otherwise. When we assign to God actions differently than He would have done, we are bearing false witness about Him. And there is no check to fix the problem, it is in the author's authority to say this is what God would have done. When you think of nonfiction, somebody can take the facts and they can distort what God did with the facts, but there is a check because it's real. There's a check because there are people that were there and there are other people that have written about it. When you fictionalize something you can't possibly hold that it's real or not real. I remember the DaVinci Code was a big problem maybe thirty years or so ago in the church. The thing about the DaVinci Code is that the author would say this is all true and then if anybody pushed him on a fact he would say it was just a work of fiction. By doing that, nobody could correct him so he went and created a lot of people who thought the Illuminati existed, that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene and then disappeared on the cross and all this other garbage that's totally false, but nobody could hold him to it because his excuse was that he was just a fiction author. Then you would ask him if it was real and he would say it was all real then you say something is wrong and he would say he was a fiction author. With fiction no one can hold the author accountable, obviously God can, but no one can hold the author accountable to what he wrote being right or wrong because he is god for that book. Nonfiction doesn't have the same problem, they are describing what God did so you point and say God didn't do this, the book is wrong. Remember this also, that for a fiction book to be wildly popular, what is required for it? What's required for it is that it has to distort who God is because if it reflects who God truly is, there are few who want the real God, there are few who enter by the narrow gate, there are few who walk the narrow path. That's not who the fiction writer is writing for, I can tell you that because they are writing to sell a lot of books, they're not writing for the few, those who want to accurately depict God. By speaking truth and writing truth they end up reflecting the true God, but the person who says that they can just fictionalize things, they have to turn from the true God or nobody would buy their books. When God came down and dwelt among us He was not widely popular, He was widely despised by men because what He did was different than

what they expected. When Jesus Christ came to the Jews, they put Him to death because He was not the Messiah they wanted. That's why seven days earlier they sang "Hosanna", but then seven days later they put Him to death because He was not the Messiah they wanted. If you write one that really reflects God they won't want that book any more than they wanted Jesus Christ. Do we think the nature of total depravity has changed? The best way to discern whether a book is accurately reflecting God is that no one would buy it except a few. A popular book by its nature proves that it's selling to people because they distort who God is. So compare that to writing history or science or theology or any other subject where the the object is to speak truth. It's not somebody's opinion that no one else can come along and correct, it's someone's opinion that the truth has the final word. If you write about history someone can come along and say they found these letters and what they wrote isn't true, I saw this happen or I spoke to this witness and there's a potential at least to be corrected. Think about the reporting that happens after these hurricanes or after the shooting in Las Vegas. You hear all these stories and slowly the stories start to change and they start to morph and it starts to show what really happened. That's the self-correcting nature of nonfiction. Whether it's science and people do these experiments after and they say, no that's not right and it gets fixed and changed, or history where people say that's not right and here's proof that it's not right. There is an ability to correct nonfiction that's different than an ability to correct fiction. With history you always have to select what facts that you want to speak about, and you can never select all of them because if everyone wrote everything Christ did, it would talk all the world to record it and that's true of any long period or relatively short period. There's just too much to write down so everybody has to choose a selection of facts, but when it's nonfiction someone else can come along behind them and choose a different selection of facts and say this is why you're wrong. There's a basis for debate on accurately reflecting who God is rather than distorting who God is. That constraint helps, that constraint makes it so people don't make up things as wildly, or at least not for a long period of time. Another thing that's inherently wrong with fiction is if man is the author of fiction, which he always is, he can only write as the man and because he is only writing as a man, he will always end up glorifying man, he can't glorify God because he is not God and he doesn't know how God thinks. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth. There is different power in different forms of fiction. Movies are far more powerful than books and part of that is because movies require suspension of disbelief. They want you to think the movie is real and it starts out in two dimensions. This might surprise you, but there are no two dimensional people in the world. So the first thing that you have to do when you start watching a movie, in order to get absorbed in the story, is you have to suspend your disbelief. You have to say those are real people up there, you have to accept that and you have to be part of the story. That's inherent in anyone who makes a fiction movie does, they try to get you to suspend your disbelief. So as you watch the movie, the suspension of disbelief really means that you're not going to discern. You're not going to ask if it makes sense, is that right, or is that really what God would do because by the time you think those thoughts the next scene comes up and if you're going to be engaged in the movie you can't keep thinking like that. The next image comes and you have to understand that image. It's a great way to convince people of things that they never would have been convinced of otherwise. Somebody did a study when Brokeback Mountain came out and if you describe the movie it's about a man who goes every year, and this is just from reading a review like five years ago so I might have some of it wrong,

but every year he would go and have an affair with a man and then go back with his wife. Finally after twenty years or something he decides to abandon his wife and live as a sodomite with this man on this ranch. You hear that and it's a disgusting story. If you hear it accurately, here's a man who hates his wife and he abandons her and destroys his relationship and it's evil. People walked in to that movie and something like 10-15% of the people that walked into that movie supported gay marriage that didn't when they walked in because they couldn't discern. They kept popping up nice images before them and before they could think about it not being about him loving this man, it's him cheating on his wife, it's him abandoning his children, it's him abandoning all his responsibilities, it's him rejecting God. Before you can think about any of that they just put up other images to the point where it actually convinces people. You need to make sure you understand the power of movies and the power of movies is inherent in the form to actually stop you from taking every thought captive. Movies do not allow time for consideration. With movies the next idea comes quickly so the previous thought cannot be taken captive to Christ. Many books can be read that way, but at least with a book you can stop and ask if this is true, does this match the world the way God built it? But how often do you read it that way? How often do you read books that you have that level of discernment where you ask if this is really what God would have done? Most people don't because if they're reading a book of fiction, one of the main reasons they read the book of fiction is for entertainment and for pleasure. If you actually work through it and ask if this is true or false or reasonable in the sight of God, it kind of loses its thrill. But still, we need to recognize the both, through books and movies, people can be deceived to believe things about God because they bear false witness. Let me give you three arguments the other way. Having said this to a lot of people over the years I get pushback in certain ways so I want to give the counter arguments too. The first and best counter argument is parables. The argument goes, but Christ uses parables and that's basically a fictionalized story. Here's the answer to that. First of all, Christ did use parables, but you realize how many stories Christ used. A lot of things He said weren't parables, it's only a parable if it starts with the introduction of it being a parable. He would usually start with, 'there's a man who, there was a tower, etc'. Those aren't parables. God could create the situation, He is God and so He can point to a situation and say this is what happened in that situation. When He uses parables, understand why He uses parables. The parables were also intended to hide truths, not to reveal them. So the people who say you can write fiction because of parables, we're not in an age where we're supposed to use parables in that way. Christ explains why He used parables in Matthew 13:34-36, "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the

prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field"" If you go on there, God says to Isaiah, you will speak in parables, they will be blinded by the parables. Jesus isn't speaking to the multitude in parables because they're saying if they just had the right story they would understand who God is, He speaks to them in parables so they won't know who God is. When He goes into the disciples, when they come to Him, He says it's given for them to know and then He explains what the parable means. The parable was not given so that you can say fiction is good, the parable was given as a judgement on Israel so those promises that were made 750 years before, with God's longsuffering when it comes to pass in Christ, this is why He

did parables. To use parables as an example and to say it's good because Christ spoke in parables isn't true because Christ spoke in parables to hide the truth, we're supposed to be the light. Christ had a purpose for it, it was so Israel would reject Him and we could be brought into the kingdom. Darkness came upon Israel so that the Gentiles could be brought in so they would crucify Him. We're not trying to get anybody crucified now. The reason Jesus Christ used parables is not any excuse for us to go use fiction. Other things about parables, one is the parables don't have names. Jesus Christ is not creating a new world, Jesus Christ is just giving an example from the existing world. It's like a woman who has a hundred pieces of silver and she loses one piece and she searches the whole house and has a party at the end because she finds the piece that was missing. There are no names there, there's no creating a new world, God is just giving an example in this world about something that applies in another way. That's not what fiction works are like today, where everyone is named, where you're creating a world that's different than this world. His parables are short too, they are short and they show one point. Fiction books now aren't short and show one point, they're not like two verses. Instead what they are is to really create an alternate reality and that's sin. As more information is added you start to have to connect the dots and it starts to seem more real to the person. Even Jesus' parables mislead. If you ever read Augustines analysis of the parable of the Prodigal Son, you see how easy it is to take even Jesus' parables and try to make them into a word that they were not intended to be and to deceive with them and bear false witness to who God is with them. An analogy or parable that teaches a distinct lesson, I would put in a very different category than fiction. Another argument for fiction is that all history is an abstract anyway. Any recording of history is going to skip details. Skipping those details could mean that you are bearing false witness of who God is. That is clearly true, you can sin in writing nonfiction. You can write history books in such a way that it distorts what God did. People do this all the time, but that's not an excuse for why it's okay to write fiction, that's just a recognition that with nonfiction people can bear false witness about who God is too. Given a set of facts you can put them together in such a way that it misleads, but that means it's possible to sin with nonfiction. My question is, is it possible not to sin with fiction, where you have created a false narrative. Fiction is lies and truth doesn't spring forth from lies. Jesus Christ is truth, truth doesn't come from lies. Lies start with truth and then add corruption to the truth. Jesus Christ is truth, Satan is the father of lies. Fiction is about writing engaging things that aren't true. Understand what happens, understand that to your child who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ, does not know the truth, his appetite is going to be for lies. Don't deceive yourself, this is the doctrine of total depravity, or a derivative of it. Those that do not know God will not want God, they will want the lies. The counterfeit is usually more attractive than the genuine, which is why the amount of fiction and nonfiction flipped over the 19th century. Fiction by its very nature is about putting man at the center. Over that same time what happened between 1800 and 1900, is the theology of this nation flipped from primarily Calvinism to Arminianism. At the same time the focus of why books were written flipped too. The primary focus was on what God did to the primary focus being on what man did through fiction. Once fiction was acceptable it quickly drove out the non-fiction, because when you are not attached to facts it is relatively easy to write something that appeals to the emotions. Because the constraints of time and space are removed, a fictional story can move far faster and things can happen sooner than it does in the real world. The reality is that the world moves slowly as a testimony of the longsuffering of God, fiction books move quickly

as a testimony of the impatience of man. They don't write fiction books that move really slowly because people don't want to read them, but the reality is that God is longsuffering. The third one that I have heard over the years is that they use Ephesians 5:1, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." They say God is a Creator so therefore we are supposed to imitate God and be a creator. But that's to take that verse out of context. The biggest divide in all of existence is the difference between the creator and the creature. The creator lives outside of time, the creature lives within time. Everything that we touch is part of the creature and we don't have any way to be part of the creator, we don't even know what it's like to be a creator. Those who say that because we're supposed to imitate God and God was a creator so therefore we should go create, they don't know what it means to create. We just take what God gave us and shuffle it around. We can't speak and have the world come into existence, we can't speak and have time start so we can't imitate God as a Creator because He didn't even show us what it means or looks like. If there is no time or space, where is God? We don't know, but He was, and is, and always will be. But that is outside of our realm of time and knowledge so we can't imitate God as a Creator. When we write a book, understand we are writing it as a creature and if we're writing it as a creature and people admire it, who are they admiring? They are admiring the creature rather than the Creator. They are violating Romans 1:24. If you go back to Ephesians 5, verse after verse is about being holy, not doing what He does, but being holy like He is holy as we are commanded to be perfect as He is perfect. Ephesians 5:6 says, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Fiction is empty words, let no one deceive you with empty words.

Let me give you about ten results that I see in society because of fiction and the effects fiction has had on us as a nation. The first one is we have a habit of suspending disbelief. Like I said with reading the book, if you read it and don't suspend disbelief in every sentence, it's hard to read a fiction book. If you go and watch a fiction movie, you suspend disbelief with every frame and it becomes very hard to watch the movie. A country whose diet is completely filled, who spends hours a day watching fiction and reading fiction, then we get into the habit of suspending disbelief. We don't think that we're supposed to actually look at things with discernment, we don't look and say we're supposed to understand these things. Because of that, once it becomes a habit to suspend disbelief, we become more gullible as a culture. We are a very gullible culture. We have these fads run through our culture that have no basis in fact, but yet as a people we've learned that you're not supposed to think about things, you're just supposed to accept them because that's inherent to enjoy fiction, to not think about them just accept them. We don't know how to think critically because that diminishes the entertainment and we embrace fiction in the first place to get that entertainment. That means people can mislead you because you're gullible, because you don't think critically. The errors with global warming are really easy to see, the errors in science are really easy to see, but as a nation we can't see them because we're so gullible we can't think anymore. You can just take that one subject, but you can take a whole bunch of other subjects and just ask why people don't see them. They don't see them because they have been trained on a diet of fiction that says you're not supposed to see them because if you don't see them, it's not fun anymore. We have an expectation of consistencies in the world, we don't have an expectation for the world to actually

work and be consistent. We think everything has a random chance because in fiction, whatever the author wants to happen is what happens next. We lose the principles that say that God has ordered the world in a certain way. Now, we can be like Job's friend and take that too far the wrong way, but we need to make sure that we recognize when we see inconsistencies, and this is something I learned last year with what was going on at Hope. I had seen inconsistencies and just kind of dismissed them. That's fictionalizing the world. Inconsistencies are real because there is an explanation for them because God is an orderly God. When we just look at things and you read a fiction book, there are inconsistencies because he's not God and he can't keep everything straight. God is God, He does keep things straight. When we see inconsistencies we should think, 'Wait a second, that doesn't match the other facts that I know.' Go figure out why because they should match, truth is truth, it is always consistent with itself. It might be that we can't understand it, but we've come to accept that these things, there are inconsistencies. The reality is that the world is a consistent place, everything connects together because it's all true in Jesus Christ. The next is we have an expectation of simplicity in the world. When everything gets solved in an hour, when every conflict is resolved in 500 pages, we expect all the problems to be resolved easily. For the politician to say they're going to do this and it will solve all the difficulties and problems, we've decided the world is like what it is on a murder mystery, where in an hour they always get their man. The world is not like that, the world is very complex because of who God is. That's the next one, fiction deceives as to who God is so that a simplistic world will imply a simplistic God. We know from Romans 1, that everything in the world declares the nature of God, even His Godhead. If we believe the world is really simple, then what do we think about God? We will always think He is really simple. Is God simple? No! God is infinitely complex. A simplistic world gives a simplistic God so you get the idea that you walk an aisle and He must accept you. Or you go pray a prayer and this means you are good with God because God has to be simple, but God isn't simple. Those simple things aren't what Paul wrote about, He says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. He said to make your calling and election sure. He doesn't say to just do what you do in a fiction book. In the end of the fiction book the hero crosses the finish line or whatever the story is about, the detective gets his person and it's all over, and it's really simple. That's not the world, but the church has adopted that. When it says to just raise a hand or pray a prayer, it's adopted that idea. We live in a fictionalized church, that's the church in America. It's had real effects. That's how America depicts salvation, how does God depict it? He compares it to birth, which takes nine months. In Ezekiel 37, he even splits it where you get the idea of conception and birth because Ezekiel speaks to the bones twice in the Valley of Dry Bones. He speaks when they start to knit together and then speaks when life goes into them. God shows that it's a long process, but we think it's just raising your hand and praying a prayer and you're done. We've made the world simple because fiction by its very nature has to make the world simple. Fiction rejects the complexity of history, which is what we're going through right now. They're tearing down these Confederate statues and all these things because they want to look at the world in a really simplistic way. If you reject the complexities of the world, you reject the complexity of God, and you reject the complexities of history. This is what's happening in our world. Another different aspect is there is an expectation of excitement. In fiction there is always something that's going to happen next. It's interesting that you read fiction from 150 years ago and they didn't have the same attitude. Dumas wrote like 200 pages about the sewer system in Paris. It's really hard to read by the

way. Now the idea is nobody would read it so if you go and read *Les Miserables*, they delete that part of the book because no one wants to read 200 pages about the sewer system in Paris. This is what has changed over the last 150 years. Now we want something and we want it fast, we think that there should be excitement. Do you realize God is the God of the mundane? 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." God is God when you're eating dinner, God is God when you're going to bed, God is God in every aspect of your life. Fiction says all those other aspects don't matter and God says all those other aspects are really in the end where you glorify God. Fiction dismisses what is the basic purpose of man, which is to glorify God. Not just on Sunday morning, not just when there is 'excitement', but when you're alone and you're waiting, when you're cooking dinner, when you're washing clothes and doing all the things that are the basic mundane things of the world, God is there and in those you are supposed to be worshipping God. Fiction cuts all that out. To quote Dabney again, "The habitual contemplation of fictitious scenes, however pure, produces a morbid cultivation of the feelings and sensibilities, to the neglect and injury of the active virtues. The purpose for which fictions are read, and the drama is frequented, is to excite the attention and the emotions. They must be animated and full of incidents, or they will not be popular." It gives an appetite for something exciting to be happening. The real world is a lot slower. If you really write about something and you write history, you have to skip five years, like Edison inventing the lightbulb, you can't have it happening five minutes later. You have to deal with the fact even in the book you have to deal with the fact that he tried 5,000 different filaments before he found one that would work. This is how the world really works and we teach impatience in our children when we start to teach impatience as a virtue. When we give them fiction where something is going to happen on the next page, that's not what really happens. It's a rejection of practical work because the expectation that fiction will go at a pace, people don't expect it to take years to produce something. Everybody expects it to be quick, everybody expects instant gratification, but that isn't how the world works, that isn't what God does. We've read Acts and we're going through Acts. There are seven chapters about Paul's life and we've covered eighteen years. How much of the mundane over those years were the mundane? You can read those chapters in about an hour, but it took him eighteen years to live it. You get that feeling, even in the passage this morning of going to this island and this island, this is how life really is. Fiction rejects that idea that you actually have to go out there and labor and things take time. It's a rejection of true sowing and reaping because so often in fiction there's a detachment between what they do because they don't want to spend the time it takes to really do something. They just skip and they say this person is in this position, but they don't show the work that it took, they don't show the labor. Like the detective shows, they go and find something. Do you realize in most cases it takes them six months before they have that 'aha!' moment, but they don't do that in tv shows because you can't fit it in an hour. God made man to work and fiction cuts out the work of life. The most important one is that it demonstrates the lack of need for God. All these things happen because the author said they needed to happen, not because God did it. Then it turns around and makes people think that they can play God in the real world. We have a nation filled with people who think that you can just go do whatever you want, you can go say this is evil, this is good, that you can declare it so you have mobs in the street. That's where we are as a nation and of course this goes back to the depravity of man, but let's make sure we recognize fiction feeds the depravity of man, even so-called Christian fiction. It's all about man,

it's not about God. Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." What's the first requirement of what you're supposed to meditate on? Whatever things are true. Fiction is a lie, should we meditate on it?

Oh Lord God, we do pray that You convict us where we should be convicted, that You guide us to Your ways, guide us to Your truths. Lord, all the adults have grown up in a culture that says fiction is wonderful. Let us have Your mind on the matter instead of the worlds. We ask this in Your Son's name, amen.