

## *praise for sexual morality in a christless world*

In an age of compromise, it is refreshing to read a work that takes a firm stand on a controversial topic. This book is both faithful to Scripture and pastoral in its approach. Although the sin of homosexuality is clearly described as contrary to God's will, the presentation of the Gospel is applied clearly and powerfully in a way that should bring comfort and hope to the repentant. I pray that it will be widely read. It will offer clarity to many who want to believe the truth but don't always know how to defend it.

—Rev. Daniel Preus, DD

Third Vice President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
President of the Luther Academy Board of Directors

The long run of conservative morality in this country that has been shaped by Christian ethics is coming to an end. In a wonderful, biblically faithful way, Rueger shows what it means to be a confessing Christian in the twenty-first century as he turns our attention to the bold witness of the first-century Christians who stood out among a promiscuous society and turned the world to the Gospel. This book will help those suffering under sexual confusion with a biblical sexual morality that is both compassionate and Christ-centered.

—Rev. Gary W. Zieroth, DMin

Senior Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church and School, Chaska, MN  
Adjunct Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN  
Interim Director, PALS (Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support)

We live in a world where traditional views on sexuality and marriage are collapsing. How do we stand up for a Christian position when it is rejected simply because it is Christian? Dr. Rueger uses Scriptures and early Christianity to show that we are not alone, nor is there anything new under the sun. His discussions are thoughtful and clear, compassionate and Christ-centered. Biblical sexual morality will always be countercultural. This book is a helpful, welcome apologetic.

—Deaconess Sandra Rhein

Hymnal Consultant, LCMS Office of International Missions  
Deaconess, Emmaus Lutheran Church, South Bend, IN

Against all odds, this timely book offers a beautiful contribution to the ongoing challenge of sexual morality. At a point when many of us are tired of hearing about it, Dr. Rueger has managed to engage the topic in a gently compelling way. He has written elegantly about a decidedly inelegant subject,

demonstrating enviable dignity and a gracious decorum throughout. His firsthand participation in the public debate has evidently served him well. His arguments are well organized, thoroughly developed, and consistently evangelical. He is faithful in bringing both the Law and the Gospel to bear, and in his cogent use of reason and sound logic. I honestly did not expect to enjoy this book, but was surprised to find how pleasant and encouraging it is.

—Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, PhD  
Pastor, Emmaus Evangelical Lutheran Church, South Bend, IN

Matthew Rueger reminds us that wider social opposition to Christian sexual morality is no recent, contemporary development. Christians have been mocked and sanctioned to varying degrees for their opposition to social sex practices since the first century. Their courage encourages us today to remain resolute with Scriptural testimony—even when we might be mocked or sanctioned—not for the sake of culture wars or condemnation of others, but to continue to set forth the new life in Christ. Rueger calls for steadfastness in the face of increasing social opposition while offering deeply-reasoned pastoral insights to serve repentance from immorality, reconciliation with God, and healing in the Spirit.

—Rev. Gifford Grobien, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology  
Director of DMin Program  
Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN

“The world’s goin’ to hell in a handbasket!” So lament many modern Christians, surrounded by confusing ethical issues of our day. While believers in Christ may be tempted to throw up their hands in an increasingly challenging social context, we have hope. This hope is clearly and compellingly laid out in Matthew Rueger’s excellent book.

Instead of hand-wringing, Rueger gives advice for remaining true to the Christian witness. Not only does he present a Christian perspective on many sexual ethical issues; he does so by providing a clear contextual, historical, and biblical background in a way that provides hope and guidance for modern Christians. It is scholarly and yet accessible to an average reader. This book would be a terrific resource for adult Bible classes, or for older teens and parents to provide discussion material for navigating the moral and biblical questions of our time.

—Professor Scott and Julie Stiegemeier  
Authors of *Your Marriage by God’s Design* (CPH, 2014)

# SEXUAL MORALITY IN A CHRISTLESS WORLD

*matthew rueger*



Peer Reviewed



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1: THE ROMAN CONTEXT	11
Sexual Orientation	12
Pederasty	15
The Gymnasium	19
Womanhood and Family	20
A World of Promiscuity	25
The Example of Rome's Leaders	26
Other Expressions of Sexual Promiscuity	35
Rome's Self-Image and the Vestal Virgins	38
Summary	40
CHAPTER 2: THE JEWISH CONTEXT	43
Marriage and Family	44
Divorce	47
No Equal Justice	48
Levirate Marriage	50
Virginity and Purity	51
Sex and Children	54
Homosexuality	55
CHAPTER 3: VERSES EXAMINED	59
Revisiting Context	59
General Passages about Marriage	63
Sexual Morality and Homosexual Sex	76
General Passages on Sexual Conduct	92

CHAPTER 4: MOM, DAD, I'M GAY	97
The Role of the Church	102
Matthew 19 and Eunuchs	104
Temptation and Sin	109
Homosexuality and Orientation	113
Summary	117
CHAPTER 5: A MIXED BAG OF OBJECTIONS	119
Inconsistency in Applying the Law	120
Christian Failure to Accept Homosexuality Is Linked to Racial Prejudice	127
Born That Way: Chasing the Evidence	135
Why Would Someone Choose to Be Homosexual?	144
The APA Decided Homosexuality Was Not a Mental Disorder in 1973	148
But the Bible Says You Should Not Judge	152
Summary	156
CHAPTER 6: REASON IN DEFENSE OF OPPOSITE-SEX MARRIAGE	157
Financial Considerations	161
The Effects of Family Structure	162
Moral Considerations	168
The Fallout	172
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: "I JUST WANT TO HEAR THE GOSPEL"	175

# INTRODUCTION

During the fall semester of 2010, my future son-in-law, Ryan, was attending an ethics class at Iowa State University. His professor's teaching method pushed students to reassess accepted views on ethics, morality, and politics. On one particular weekend, when Ryan came to visit my daughter, I heard him complain about how sexual ethics were being presented in this class. It frustrated him that other students were taught to see sexuality in humanistic terms where sexual morality was an open question. Ryan felt that Christian standards of sexual morality were being presented as outdated and largely irrelevant. That certainly was not limited to the ethics classroom. At that time, outside one of the university cafeterias every Wednesday, a table was set up offering free condoms right across from another table bearing a sign that read "Ask an Atheist," which was manned by an atheist ready to debunk irrational religious ideas. Among the many student organizations offered at the university was a club called "Cuffs" that advertised itself as a group that met for discussion and education. Among the topics of interest discussed are BDSM (which includes: Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism), fetishes, and "alternative sexuality."<sup>1</sup> It was nicknamed the "orgy club" by some of the students. I suspect that the sexual hedonism witnessed by Ryan is typical of most secular university campuses. His disappointment and frustration with such immorality is felt by scores of Christian students.

I shared Ryan's frustration, and as we talked, I searched for something to say to make him feel like all was not lost. I finally suggested that he should stay after class and voice his concerns to the professor. Not really thinking Ryan would actually do it, I suggested that he approach the professor saying that in the spirit of academic freedom, a speaker should be brought in who could present sexual ethics from a conservative point of view. That way the students would have an opportunity to see firsthand how both sides of the debate shape their ethical arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> Iowa State University Student Organization Database, [www.stuorg.iastate.edu/site/cuffs](http://www.stuorg.iastate.edu/site/cuffs) (accessed January 21, 2016).

Ryan is a very quiet young man and not the type to be verbally confrontational, but he must have been more upset than I knew, because much to my surprise, Ryan did go to his professor and pass on my suggestion; and then even more to my surprise, the professor agreed! I do not know exactly how the conversation progressed after that, but somehow Ryan suggested me as the counterpoint to the professor and the professor again agreed.

The professor emailed me and asked specifically that I address homosexuality and same-sex marriage, not just from a conservative point of view, but from a Christian perspective. Suddenly, I found myself having to prepare a reasoned presentation on sexual ethics for a secular university classroom that I knew would be hostile to my point of view. A year before this, the Iowa Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, so the topic was a hot one on university campuses throughout Iowa.

My first presentation was all the more exciting inasmuch as it followed gay pride week at Iowa State. Much to the credit of this professor, he allowed me to make my case without interruption. He also seemed to have been pleased by the way the presentation went because he asked me to return in following semesters to give the same lecture to his classes. The professor began each lecture by introducing me and telling his class to be respectful but “go after him.” They were not shy about fulfilling his wishes. Some students got angry. Some got up and left the room, letting the door slam behind them for effect. Others considered it their duty to debate me while citing articles on their smartphones. Usually one or two students stayed after the lecture and thanked me for giving voice to what they believed but were afraid to say for fear of retaliation. The experience opened my eyes to the ethical perspectives on secular university campuses. It is from my work preparing for these lectures that this volume was born.

Within recent years, the topic of homosexual rights and same-sex “marriage” has exploded. The rhetoric has become downright vicious. There is such resistance to open, reasoned, discussion that it is nearly impossible to engage in a public debate about the morality of homosexuality without being personally attacked. Sadly, the rhetoric cuts both ways. Not only are those who oppose the pro-homosexual agenda demonized, but those in favor of gay rights are often shouted down and attacked by Bible-thumping bullies. The emotional baggage brought to the debate becomes vitriolic to the point of preventing reasoned dialogue.



My desire in writing this book is to help Christians engage the world around them in reasoned discussion. I also write as a father wishing to help my children when they get dragged into debates. My wife and I have been blessed with seven children, five of which are in the university as I begin writing this. They regularly tell me about conversations they have with friends and classmates. Often they find themselves facing a group of angry peers who are more interested in shouting them down than discussing the ethics of homosexuality versus heterosexuality.

It is painful as a parent to watch your kids be treated with contempt, but we now live in an era where Christians must expect unpleasant confrontations. This is nothing new of course; the ethics of sexuality presented in the New Testament have always been both countercultural and radical. Christianity has always raised the ire of the secular status quo. A common accusation made against Christians is that biblical sexual ethics does nothing more than cling to old fashioned traditionalism; “Christians are just holding onto the past and aren’t willing to change.” As will be shown, this accusation is as ironic as it is wrong. Christian views on sexual morality were departures from older established traditions, Roman and Jewish.

When St. Paul wrote his letters to the Romans, Ephesians, and Corinthians, he was not calling on new converts to return to old traditions. He was instead calling on them to break with tradition, to dare to take a stand and admit the culture around them was wrong. Paul made it personal; he urged them to admit that they, too, had erred in the past by following cultural traditions that were out of step with God’s will. With Christ came a new way of living, a different way of thinking and acting. Paul did not weigh public opinion to see if the new Christian morality would be accepted. He knew it would not be.

Such a bold confession put Christians at odds with anyone who kept to the older cultural ways. In particular, it earned Christians the deep abiding hatred of the Roman government. Sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, intercourse between adults and adolescents, prostitution and rape were not only legal, they were part and parcel of the cultural norm. What many “progressives” today fail to understand is that the attitudes about sexuality they champion (a.k.a. open hedonism) are in reality the practices and cultural norms of societies like Rome that predate Christ’s birth. Ironically, they, and not Christians, are looking to return to ancient traditional standards.

When Paul brought Christianity to Rome, promiscuity was seen as a positive element in the economic life of Roman cities. In a keynote address to the Fourth Biennial Dignity International Convention, John Boswell, a professor at Yale University, claimed that male prostitution (directed toward other males) was not only taxed in ancient Rome but the amount of tax collected was a significant portion of the royal treasury.<sup>2</sup> Local governments depended on the sex trade. The Romans tended to be very open about their sexual exploits. Senators were known to brag in public speeches about their sexual attraction for the young men with whom they were involved. When Christians turned away from Roman sex practices, they were, in effect, calling the entire ethical system of their culture into question.

Unlike St. Paul in Rome, we have enjoyed a long run of conservative morality in this country that has been sympathetic to, if not outright shaped by, Christian ethics. Our grandparents did not have to fight against the acceptance of immorality as our children do today. When talking to one of my parishioners who recently retired, he said he had never even heard about homosexuality until he was a junior or senior in high school, and then he did not believe it was real. Thirty-five years ago, when I was in high school, there was one student who was rumored to be homosexual, and that was in a high school of about six hundred. Now my kids go to school dances and watch lesbians “making out” on the dance floor. In their high school of about 240 students, there are eight or more boys and girls either openly homosexual or claiming to be bisexual.

The world has changed and now we Christians find ourselves increasingly in the position of the Christians in St. Paul’s day as outcasts and radicals. Will we mirror the ancient Christians who were not afraid to stand out in the crowd and say, “Not for me?” Are we willing to be ostracized, excluded, secretly derided, and maybe even openly mocked simply because we are Christians? We need to be; our children need to be. The younger generation more than the adults are on the front lines with this issue, and it is they who will be forced to stand against authority figures in school and say, “That’s not what God wants.” Before they can make such a stand and present a clear case for their position, they need to

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<sup>2</sup> John Boswell, “The Church and the Homosexual: An Historical Perspective 1979,” Excerpts from the keynote address to the Fourth Biennial Dignity International Convention in 1979, Fordham University, [legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/1979boswell.asp](http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/1979boswell.asp) (accessed January 21, 2016).

know why as Christians their morality is God pleasing and why they need not be ashamed to speak about it in public.

The challenges that Christians face in the secular world will not be limited to secular venues. As society grows more comfortable with forcing its moral vision on those who disagree, Christians will find the fight creeping into the peaceful sanctuary of their churches. It is not at all unreasonable to imagine a scenario where current anti-discrimination or hate-crime laws will be used against churches to force them to perform same-sex marriages or hire pastors regardless of sexual orientation. There may come a time when congregations lose their tax exempt status if they refuse to adopt accepted secular morality. Pastors may face fines and prison time if they publicly condemn homosexuality.

Clashes between the world and Christians over sexual morality go back to the very first Christian communities. Christians today can better prepare themselves to give an answer to those who disagree by looking to the examples of our ancient forefathers and foremothers. In chapters 1 and 2, the reader will be introduced to the sexual climate in the world of the early Christians. Roman perspectives on sex exerted enormous pressure on early Christians as did rabbinical Jewish traditions about sex and marriage. Christian attitudes took shape in the midst of these divergent cultural views. Chapter 3 will explore specific Bible passages that guided Christian thought and practice. Knowing what the apostles said and in what context they said it is a necessary foundation for any discussion about sexual ethics that are genuinely Christian. In chapter 4, the focus changes; where early chapters aim primarily at helping Christians understand the roots of Christian sexual ethics, chapter 4 focuses on how this affects real people today. Debate and reasoned discussion with the secular world must exemplify the best Christian compassion with those suffering under sexual confusion. This chapter will discuss how biblical sexual morality is both compassionate and Christ-centered. Chapter 5 faces common secular objections to Christian teachings about sex. Knowing the objections of one's opponents can be helpful in shaping a coherent answer to their complaints. The final chapter offers a possible avenue of debate that may prove helpful with those who reject the Christian position simply because it is Christian.

## *chapter 1*

# THE ROMAN CONTEXT

I am a pastor, and in the seminary we were taught that one of the main principles of biblical interpretation is that context determines meaning. A person can make the Bible say whatever he or she wants it to say if words or phrases are pulled out of their context. Most times, context involves looking at the verses around a particular passage in question. It means asking, “What is the overall message of this whole section?” Determining context may also involve looking at the other writings of that same author or examining the whole of Scripture to see what the overarching teaching of Christianity is on the subject. Understanding context demands considering the world in which this or that text was written. What would that passage mean to the people to whom it was originally written? A great deal of biblical scholarship has focused on researching the historical context of Scripture.

Because the New Testament was written within the milieu of first century Judaism, it is not surprising that a lot of research has been devoted to exploring first century Jewish culture. Jesus was obviously Jewish and ministered within Jewish communities; so if we want to know about His life and the world in which He lived, we need to dig into the customs, practices, and faith of the Jewish people in His day. Indeed, such contextual research has yielded good fruit in understanding the meaning of many of Jesus’ teachings.

When the discussion turns to sexual ethics and the New Testament, though, a context that needs more scholarly attention is first century Roman culture. Nearly all of the texts dealing with sexuality were written to people living within Roman, not Jewish, cities. Since this book spends

a great deal of time addressing the issue of homosexuality, we note that the Jews did not approve of homosexual behavior. The Old Testament condemns homosexual activity in strong terms, and the Jewish people in the apostolic age would have been repulsed by homosexuality. There was little need to lay out a case against homosexuality to the Jews. The Romans, on the other hand, had no scruples about homosexual behavior, as will be shown.

If one were to overlay a map showing the missionary travels of St. Paul with a map of the Roman Empire in the first century, it could be seen that every city where Paul went was part of the Roman Empire. Every city named in his letters was Roman. Cities like Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, and Rome were governed by Roman law and Roman morality. Yes, many of these cities had roots going back centuries into Greek culture, but by Paul's day, all were "Romanized." Paul brought Christian teaching to a people whose present and ancient morality was hostile to Christianity. In both ancient Greek and first century Roman culture, homosexual behavior between males was understood as completely normal. Paul knew what he said about sexuality would be counter-cultural.

The old morality against which St. Paul stood dated back a thousand years or more. In the pages following, it is my intent to paint a more detailed picture of what the moral climate was like when St. Paul taught God's Word to the Gentile converts. This context is essential to grasp because in many regards, Rome's sexual climate is a model of the utopia for which today's sexual "progressives" are striving. If Christians wish to bear witness to the truth of Christ in today's circumstances, then understanding the struggles of first century Christians living within the context of the Roman Empire will prove helpful.

### *sexual orientation*

The apparent universal acceptance of the idea that someone is "oriented" toward a specific gender is a modern phenomenon. Often, the world divides people into those who are oriented toward the opposite sex (heterosexuals), those who are oriented toward the same sex (homosexuals), and those whose orientation includes either sex (bisexuals or pansexuals). Orientation implies that sexual preference is set by nature and is beyond one's control. This understanding was exemplified by the Iowa Supreme Court when it issued its decision legalizing same sex marriage

in 2009. The court claimed that one's sexual orientation is "immutable"—that is, it is an essential part of one's nature and "may be altered [if at all] only at the expense of significant damage to the individual's sense of self."<sup>1</sup>

Later in this volume, a separate section will be devoted to the issue of "immutability" or being "born that way."<sup>2</sup> For now, this matter is raised only to demonstrate the fact that orientation is a legally recognized means of speaking of sexuality. It is simply a given in our culture that people are oriented toward one kind of sexuality—hetero, homo, or bi.

The ancient world of the Greeks and Romans did not understand sexuality in terms of orientation. Some authors have claimed that the first notions of orientation can be found in later Roman thinking (second and third century),<sup>3</sup> yet from the evidence supplied, this was a minority opinion that hardly ever entered into the public conversation.

Sexuality went beyond orientation. For the Greek world, sex was about the pursuit of beauty. Greeks were captivated by the beauty of the young male form. It is no accident that the Greek god of love, Eros (from which we get the word *erotic*), was portrayed as a young boy. The Roman counterpart to Eros was Cupid (from the Latin "Cupido" or "desire"), a deity also pictured as a young boy. Ancient Greek texts are full of references to the pursuit of homosexual intercourse with boys because their beauty was the most striking to the eye.

The Romans at first seemed to consider this Greek obsession with the beauty of boys a cause of weakness. Roman sexuality was different than Greek. It was tied more to ideas of masculinity and the Roman male's need for domination. That being said, there are still many ancient manuscripts showing how Romans continued to obsess over male beauty and sexuality. Plutarch (late first to early second century AD) gives expression to this: "The noble lover of beauty engages in love wherever he sees excellence and splendid natural endowment without regard for any difference in physiological detail."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Varnum v. Brien, No. 07–1499, IA, 44 (April 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 113ff. and 135ff.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas K. Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 444.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume IX, trans. by Edwin L. Minar Jr., F. H. Sandbach, W. C. Helmbold in Loeb Classical Library Volume 425 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 415. Copyright © 1961 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Loeb

In the Roman mind, the strong took what they wanted to take. It was socially acceptable for a strong Roman male to have intercourse with men or women alike, provided he was the aggressor. It was looked down upon to play the female “receptive” role in homosexual liaisons. However, even that was allowed provided the man had proven his strength in other areas. For instance, Julius Caesar was well-known to have “played the woman” with Nicomede, the king of Bithynia. Soldiers returning from Gaul even sang songs about it: “The Gauls to Caesar yield, Caesar to Nicomede, Lo! Caesar triumphs for his glorious deed, but Caesar’s conqueror gains no victor’s mead.”<sup>5</sup> Julius Caesar’s sexual exploits were so well-known that a public orator said that Julius is “Every woman’s man and every man’s woman.”<sup>6</sup> Despite the raised eyebrows with Julius playing the woman in sexual encounters with men, he was given a pass by society because he proved his strength and manliness through his many military conquests.

Because of the worship of manly strength, it was acceptable for a man to have sex with his slaves, male or female. It was understood that he would be visiting prostitutes of either sex. A strong Roman male would have male lovers even while married to a woman. In the Roman mind, man was the conqueror who dominated on the battlefield as well as in the bedroom. He was strong, muscular, and hard in both body and spirit. Society looked down on him only when he appeared weak or soft. Being the receiver of a sex act was considered feminine and therefore soft or weak. The very language used to describe men given to homosexuality and a word St. Paul himself used in 1 Corinthians 6 is *malakos*, which means “soft.”

This attitude toward male strength shaped Roman views about rape. Rape, by and large, was prosecutable only if it involved free Roman citizens. The penalties tended to be monetary fines, not imprisonment or death. The Caesars, who were the icons of Roman strength, lived above legal repercussions for their sexual conquests. The Caesars are known to have had intercourse with the wives of senators and other highly placed public figures without civil penalties. Augustus is said to have used this as

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<sup>5</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. Alexander Thomson, rev. by T. Forester (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 34.

a means of uncovering plots against him by the husbands of the women with whom he slept.<sup>7</sup>

### *pederasty*

This pursuit of beauty and maintaining of the masculine ideal led to a deeply pervasive institution in Greek and later Roman culture called pederasty. Pederasty is a sexual relationship between an adult man and an adolescent boy. This was no flash-in-the-pan moral blip that came and went. This was a thousand-year-old social institution that enjoyed complete acceptance by Greek and Roman society.

In his book *Roman Homosexuality*, Craig Williams identifies a difference between Greek and Roman pederasty.<sup>8</sup> While the Greeks made no distinction between citizen and noncitizens in such relationships, it was, at least in the early years of the Republic, a taboo for Roman men to pursue pederast relations with freeborn boys. Freeborn boys were Roman citizens and were also potential leaders in Roman society. They were to be treated with more respect and held more legal rights than those not born free Roman citizens. However, taboo or not, the practice of Roman sexual relations with freeborn boys is well-documented. What was not taboo, but a common expectation, was Roman pederasty directed at young male slaves.

If a Greek man were to describe pederasty, he would justify it as a normal part of a boy's overall education and as positive means of advancement for a youth. He would see the role of the adult male as teacher. The teacher would train the youth in matters of culture, language, social expectations, ideals of manliness, and of course, sex. Roman culture put less stress on the cultural/educational aspect of pederasty and tended to pursue it more on grounds of fulfilling one's manly desire—which made no differentiation between male or female. It was not uncommon for a Roman man to expend large amounts of money on his boy, plying him with gifts and rewarding him for various achievements. Slave boys who won the sexual affection of their masters may be set free when they matured.

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<sup>7</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 122.

<sup>8</sup> Craig A Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 62–64.



At the end of the day, however, regardless of any educational, social, or financial benefits, the boy was being raped. He was raped repeatedly over the course of several years with his and his family's permission. This "love affair" between a man and his boy was praised as one of deep affection and devotion. Many ancient poems and works of prose exist where the man swoons at his sexual desire for his boy. The pederast relationship did not end until the boy reached adulthood and began to grow facial and body hair. To delay the maturation process and keep his youthful looks, his body hair might be plucked out or otherwise depilated. In the case of slaves, he might be castrated.

For a thousand years, pederasty was the norm. More than the norm, in many circles it was actually considered the purest form of love. In both the Greek and Roman mind, the relationship between man and woman in marriage was not a union of equals. A man's wife was often seen as beneath him and less than him, but a sexual relationship with another male, boy or man, represented a higher form of intellectual love and engagement. It was a man joining with that which was his equal and who could therefore share experiences and ideas with him in a way he could not with a woman.

There was a serious contradiction in the psychology of Roman sexuality. On the one hand, there were no scruples about men having intercourse with other men (usually young men or boys). Homosexual behavior was accepted by the vast majority of Romans. On the other hand, there were issues for the Romans with being on the receiving side of that homoerotic union. The receiver was looked down upon as weak and soft. He was becoming the woman in the sexual relationship and therefore was not the ideal Roman aggressor. In pederasty, boys who were being "educated" to become the Roman ideal of strength and virility were expected to be the receiver of the adult man's sexual advances. It was excused on the basis that an adolescent boy was not yet a man and therefore was more soft and womanly in physical form. But still, it was against the stated purpose of shaping the ideal Roman male to expect the boy to play the woman.

To ease consciences with regard to this apparent contradiction, it was expected of the boy that he show some resistance. He was to refuse his adult male courtier for a time and allow himself to be pursued and bribed with gifts. If he was too willing, then his manhood could be called into question. This desire of preserving potential manhood in boys by expecting them to resist predates the Roman Empire in which St. Paul

lived. A historian named Ephorus of Cyme (fourth century BC) recorded how on Crete there was a practice of ritualistic abduction of young boys. By ritualistically abducting boys, even with a mock show of resistance, boys could claim they were not willing and therefore were not womanly. Ephorus writes:

They have a peculiar custom in regard to love affairs, for they win the objects of their love, not by persuasion, but by abduction; the lover tells the friends of the boy three or four days beforehand that he is going to make the abduction; but for the friends to conceal the boy, or not to let him go forth by the appointed road, is indeed a most disgraceful thing, a confession, as it were, that the boy is unworthy to obtain such a lover; and when they meet, if the abductor is the boy's equal or superior in rank or other respects, the friends pursue him and lay hold of him, though only in a very gentle way, thus satisfying the custom; and after that they cheerfully turn the boy over to him to lead away.<sup>9</sup>

While I am no psychologist, there does seem to be something akin to pathological behavior at work here. There is tacit admission that pederasty is wrong—because youths must be abducted and not go willingly, yet it is accepted and even celebrated. Why resist what is good or innocent? Such resistance betrays some dim flicker of conscience that knows sex with boys is improper. Unfortunately, the reality of the sinful conscience is that it can be turned off altogether, and what is wrong can be justified as right and good.

Consideration of such practices may be unpleasant to Christian readers, but it serves to clarify the nature of the biblical witness. Our early Christian ancestors did not confess biblical chastity in a safe culture that naturally agreed with them. The sexual morality they taught and practiced stood out as unnatural to the Roman world just as Christian teachings about sex are labeled as unnatural in our day. The temptation many face today is to hide their confession for fear of how it will be received. They may believe that it is pointless to debate sexual morality in the public arena because the odds are stacked so hopelessly against them. But the social context of the early Christians shows that it is not hopeless.

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<sup>9</sup> Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, vol. 5, trans. Horace Jones (London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1928), 155, 157.

The sexual climate in their day was worse in certain respects than it is today. Yet, they confessed Christ and stood firm in the sexual morality bound to His name.

To the Greeks and Romans, the love between a man and a boy was seen as superior to the love between a man and a woman. Lucian's (second century AD) *Affairs of the Heart* features a debate between two men, Lycinus and Callicratidas, over the topic of love. Lycinus makes the case that loving women is better than loving boys. Callicratidas favors the love of boys. Callicratidas argues,

Let women be ciphers and be retained merely for child-bearing; but in all else away with them, and may I be rid of them. For what man of sense could endure from dawn onwards women who beautify themselves with artificial devices, women whose true form is unshapely, but who have extraneous adornments to beguile the unsightliness of nature? If at any rate one were to see women when they rise in the morning from last night's bed, one would think a woman uglier than those beasts whose name it is inauspicious to mention early in the day. That's why they closet themselves carefully at home and let no man see them.<sup>10</sup>

"Love" as it was described by Greek and Roman authors was the sexual engagement of equal minds. Plato and Socrates took this to the extent of resisting physical intercourse completely and focusing on intellectual engagement with other boys and men. There are stories of Socrates resisting the sexual advances of a young man and lying with him all night in embrace, never allowing their physical interaction to go beyond the embrace (much to the frustration of the young man who wanted it to go further). For most men, the physical sexual relationship was a natural extension of the meeting of equal minds. In Greek culture, sex for the sake of pure selfish physical gratification was socially denounced. They argued that intercourse with boys was a virtuous activity that benefited all of society.

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<sup>10</sup> *Lucian*, Volume VIII, trans. by M. D. Macleod, Loeb Classical Library Volume 432 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 210. Copyright © 1967 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Loeb Classical Library® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

## The gymnasium

This sexual exploitation of young boys began in the early adolescent years. Boys were trained to see themselves in bisexual terms. For example, a large element in the education of adolescent males was physical training through the local gymnasium. This was the place boys went to mold their bodies into the Roman male ideal. But their gyms were not like the gyms of today, where boys and girls play games in their gym uniforms. Activities in these ancient gyms were done in the nude. The word *gymnasium* comes from the Greek word γυμνός (*gymnos*) meaning “naked.” The gymnasium is a Greek creation continued by the Romans, and one of the most popular activities for young boys at the gym was wrestling. Several ancient manuscripts have been found where wrestling coaches were accused of having intercourse with or fondling the boys during wrestling practice. Sexuality permeated Roman sports. The Olympic Games were initially run in the nude.

Certain scholars have argued that the gymnasium was frowned upon by Romans even as they continued the Greek practice. Some Romans thought the way boys were lavishly pampered with massages and body oiling contributed to a Greek softness that eventually led to the fall of Greece. Yet, these suspicions held by a number of Romans were not enough to eliminate the gymnasium. Throughout the Roman Empire, gyms flourished as focal points for adolescent boys. Girls were not permitted in the gym (except in ancient Sparta).

The very nature of these places put sexuality in the spotlight for boys. It required them not only to shed their clothes, but also their inhibitions and any sense of modesty. Indeed, modesty was not a Roman trait. The Roman gymnasium was a place that taught boys not to shun sexual interaction with other males. A geographer of the second century named Pausanias wrote a description of an athletic academy including a gymnasium just outside Athens. At the entrance to the academy was an altar dedicated to Eros, the god of erotic love.<sup>11</sup> Sex and athletics went together.

Knowing full well that the gymnasium would attract men given to pederasty, guidelines were established about who could and could not enter these gymnasiums and watch. Although local laws varied, in general, slaves were barred from entering the gymnasium as were all

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<sup>11</sup> Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*, 73. Quoting Pausanias 1.30.1.

women and young men between the ages of twenty and twenty four. (They were not yet considered mature enough to mentor a boy in a pederast relationship.) Others who met the criteria did frequent the gymnasium and did seduce boys into sexual relations, although, as previously noted, in the case of freeborn boys, a little more discretion was necessary.

Gymnasiums in the Roman Empire were said to be as common as hospitals in our day. Every reasonably sized town had one. They were a focal point of local activity and a magnet for sexual predation throughout the Roman Empire. Boys as young as twelve or thirteen began their physical training in the gymnasium and consequently began to be approached by adult men looking for intercourse. It had to be a terrifying time for young boys. There were a few Romans who objected to the sexual relationships between men and boys. They pointed out that such acts gave the boys nothing but tears and pain, and only the man was gratified. Yet despite some minor social resistance, the practice continued.

Christian sexual ethics that limited intercourse to the marriage of a man and a woman were not merely different from Roman ethics; they were utterly against Roman ideas of virtue and love. Roman perceptions of Christian sexual ideals would have been marked by hostility. Yet, Christians confessed what they believed to be true. As Christians today engage the world around them, they should not let hostility toward the biblical witness dissuade them. The first Christians were men and women of great courage. Confessing Christian morality always requires that spirit of bravery.

### *womanhood and family*

It should be fairly obvious to the reader that women were not always held in high regard in Roman society. Of course, there were exceptions to that rule. There are examples in ancient texts of virtuous wives being honored.<sup>12</sup> There was even a cult populated by wives who only had one husband. They worshipped the goddess of female virtue known as *pudicitia* (English trans. “modesty”). Yet there is a great deal of evidence

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<sup>12</sup> Such as the story of Lucretia as told by Livy, whose virtue as a wife proved itself by her resisting the advances of another man only to be forced into intercourse. After having called her husband and having been cleared of wrongdoing, she committed suicide to preserve her honor. Cf. Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 85–95.

that womanhood as a whole was not respected. Women were often seen as weak physically and mentally. They were inferior to men and existed to serve the men as little more than slaves at times.

In ancient Greece, married women were virtual prisoners in their homes. They were allowed to participate in certain religious rites and festivals but were not given social rites beyond that. It was expected that women, especially wealthy women, remain mostly confined to their homes.<sup>13</sup>

In Rome, women were given more rights. They were allowed to be educated up to a point. They could conduct trade and be seen in public, but they were denied a voice and vote in politics. One might be tempted to see this as an improvement of the status of women from the Greeks, and in some ways it is. But the overall opinion of Roman men toward women was abysmal by modern standards. This can be seen in more detail by looking at Roman practices in marriage.

The value of a Roman wife was often tied to her ability to have children. Women were usually married in their early teens and sometimes even at age 12. The average age of men getting married was slightly over twenty. The reason women tended to be married so young was to make the most of every year they could potentially bear children. The average life-span in the Roman Empire of Paul's day was about twenty five years.<sup>14</sup> The low average life-span must be seen in light of the extremely high mortality rates for children. It is believed that half of all children died before their sixth birthday.<sup>15</sup> This created a serious problem for the Roman Empire that sought to expand and grow throughout the known world. The population of Roman freeborn citizens did not keep pace with rates of expansion. Ideally, a married couple needed to have at least three children survive to adulthood for the population to grow. But with mortality rates at fifty percent for children under six and a life expectancy of only twenty five, a woman had to bear six or more children very quickly to do her part for population growth. Her value was tied to her ability to produce children quickly.

Once again we can see a contradiction in the Roman mind. While the ideal of a Roman male continuing his genetic line favored a woman hav-

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Gagarin ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 347.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold Leis, William Percy, and Beert Verstraete, *The Age of Marriage in Ancient Rome* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Leis, Percy, and Verstraete, *The Age of Marriage in Ancient Rome*, 24.

ing as many children as she could, many couples did not want multiple children. The wealthy in particular preferred to limit the number of their offspring. Infanticide was a common practice in Rome. The low rate of children being raised to maturity became so serious that Caesar Augustus passed a law known as the *lex Papia Poppaea* that granted rewards for those who had three or more children.<sup>16</sup> All these factors contributed to an overall view of womanhood that was largely negative. A woman's importance was rooted in her ability to have as many children as her husband wanted. Divorce on grounds of infertility seems to have been common. To understand how deeply ingrained this negative attitude toward women was, one needs only look at Greek and Roman explanations for the origin of women.

The primary creation story of woman accepted by the classical world came from Greek mythology. There, woman was created as a punishment for man. As the myth goes, the world was originally populated only by men. Zeus, angered by his brother Prometheus, who stole his fire and gave it to men, decided to get back at Prometheus by unleashing evil upon mankind. Zeus decided to create a new being that would vex mankind. He enlisted the help of the other gods. They each gave this new being special qualities, including great beauty and grace, to make her desirable and alluring to men. Her name was Pandora, which means "all gifts." She was endowed with all the gifts that men would find desirable. Unfortunately, she was also implanted with deceit, smooth words, and the habits of a thief. Pandora was given to a man named Epimetheus who immediately made her his wife. This man had been given a jar by the gods. It was filled with toils, diseases, and hardships. It also contained certain blessings. Prometheus gave Epimetheus strict orders never to open the jar. Pandora, driven by the evil planted within her by the gods, opened it despite her husband's instructions to the contrary. Immediately, the toils and pains that had been held back from humanity escaped from the jar and were let loose to vex men throughout the world. Hope, which was also in the jar, became caught under the lid and was not able to escape. Men have from then on trudged through life filled with pain and misery having only hope to give them strength.

The first written reference to Pandora comes from the Greek poet Hesiod (8th–7th century BC), who wrote, "From her is the race of

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<sup>16</sup> J. A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome 90 B.C.—A.D. 212* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 46–47.

women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmates in hateful poverty, but only in wealth, . . . *even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil.*"<sup>17</sup> In *Works and Days*, Hesiod again calls the woman "a plague to men who eat bread."<sup>18</sup> As Hesiod sees it, women were lechers who proved helpful only when their men could feed their insatiable appetite for wealth. Women existed to bring "great trouble" into the lives of men. The negative sentiments are by no means limited to Hesiod. Texts dating closer to the days of St. Paul are filled with complaints from men about the pains and sorrows brought on them by their wives.

At one lecture where I presented this, a woman sitting near the front asked me if I saw a connection between the Greek myth of Pandora and the biblical story of Eve. She felt that perhaps the Jews had borrowed from the Greek myth to create Eve. She pointed out that both Eve and Pandora were latecomers into a world where man already existed. Both were responsible for sin and misery—Eve by the eating of the forbidden fruit and Pandora by opening the jar. The point she was trying to make was that the Christian understanding of women was no better than the Greeks. Both seemed to blame woman for all the pain and misery in the world.

One has to agree that there is common ground in the stories up to a point. This common ground does not suggest the Jews stole the story from the Greeks or that both stories borrowed from a more ancient story. The biblical account of Eve by far predates that of Greek mythology. If anything, the Greeks borrowed ideas from Genesis and added their own negative opinions of women to the story, twisting it to create the myth of Pandora.

The dissimilarities between the stories reveal a radically different view of womanhood. Whereas Pandora was created as a punishment for man, Eve was created as a helper and companion to Adam. Eve completed Adam and filled the emptiness he had recognized in himself (Genesis 2:18, 20). Where Pandora is made separate from mankind, Eve was created out of the very flesh of Adam. She was not merely claimed by a man because he could not resist her (as was Pandora whose attributes

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<sup>17</sup> Hesiod, "Theogony," 590–612, in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1920), 123.

<sup>18</sup> Hesiod, "Works and Days," 80–85, in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, 9.



were a trap), but was received by Adam with thanksgiving as a very part of him ("This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" [Genesis 2:23]). Pandora's "fall" is entirely the result of the designed weakness of womanhood. Zeus created her to hurt mankind. Eve's fall was the result of a failure in Adam who stood by and watched her sin without intervening. Thus, after the fall, God confronts Adam first and asks him, "Have you eaten of the tree that I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:11). Eve is not singled out as the sole source of sin in the biblical account as Pandora is in the Greek myth. Womanhood itself carries a positive understanding in Scripture.

Negative views about women in Roman society drove an additional wedge between Roman and Christian ideals. "Misogyny" became an excuse for Roman men to be unfaithful to their wives. While verbally affirming marital fidelity in marriage rites, the unspoken rule in Roman society was that men would have other lovers. Many times those lovers were boys. Martial (AD 40–104), a Spanish poet who wrote in Rome several decades after St. Paul, chastises women for being jealous when their husbands had intercourse with slave boys. He tells the wife to be thankful that she is the only woman in her husband's life, and further to accept the fact that she cannot offer the same level of quality sex that slave boys can.<sup>19</sup> One finds other writers telling wives not to worry about their husbands showing affection to boys because boys will grow up and cease to be attractive to men, at which time the wife will be the center of her husband's attention again.

A married woman was considered to be under the authority of her husband. He had legal rights over her. Unlike the biblical model, she did not have those same rights over him. He was legally free to exercise his male sexual desires with others outside the marriage. If he committed adultery with a woman of high social standing, he might find himself in legal trouble because his sexual partner was under the authority of a man with legal means.<sup>20</sup> Yet if he committed adultery with slaves or prostitutes or if he had a concubine, there was no legal recourse for the wife. It was a different matter, though, if a woman cheated on her husband. A woman caught with another male (man or boy) could be charged as an adulteress. Her male partner was also guilty under law. Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), who was concerned with immorality in Rome, complained

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 50.

<sup>20</sup> Crook, *Law and Life of Rome 90 B.C.—A.D. 212*, 101.

about the double standard in marriage.<sup>21</sup> The legal penalty for adultery allowed the husband to rape the male offender and then, if he desired, to kill his wife. Prior to Caesar Augustus, a husband was allowed to forgive his wife's infidelities. Augustus, however, made it illegal for a husband to pardon his wife for sex crimes. He was legally obligated—at a minimum—to divorce his wife if she was caught in adultery.<sup>22</sup> It is not enough to suggest that women were under-appreciated in Roman culture. There are many instances where they were treated as second-class human beings, slightly more honored than slaves.

As will be shown in the following chapters, St. Paul's treatment of women accords them a status of honor unheard of in Roman culture. This greater appreciation for womanhood is a necessary element in Paul's overall view of sexuality. It would have made the Christian position all the more radical and counter-cultural. In Christendom, a woman found a culture of genuine love that saw her as equally important as any man in the eyes of God. She was sexually equal with the man in the marriage union and had equal recourse under the law of God to demand marital fidelity. To the Romans, Paul's views would have been seen as disruptive to the social fabric and demeaning of the Roman ideal of masculinity.

### *a world of promiscuity*

In many ways, ancient Roman culture represents the kind of sexual utopia many long for today. There were very few sexual boundaries in comparison with today's moral standards. Monogamy was rarely practiced. The Stoic philosophers were among the few voices that spoke in favor of monogamy in marriage. Sadly, we seem to be approaching the same level of hedonism in our world today. Sexual activity and intercourse before marriage have become a cultural expectation. Young couples who refrain from intercourse until they are married are in a small minority. Statistics from a 2011 Centers for Disease Control study claim that about half of all high school students admit to having intercourse (though slightly more males than females).<sup>23</sup> By the time they graduate high school, the same CDC study says that 63% of young adults admit to

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<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Crook, *Law and Life of Rome 90 B.C.—A.D. 212*, 106.

<sup>23</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Sexual Risk Behavior: HIV, STD, & Teen Pregnancy Prevention," [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/) (accessed February 3, 2016).

having intercourse. As people get older, monogamy becomes harder to find. The CDC reports that statistics from 2011–2013 show men between the ages of twenty-five to forty-four have on average 6.6 sexual partners, while women of the same age group claim an average of 4.3 partners.<sup>24</sup>

The difference between Rome in the days of the apostles and Western civilization today has more to do with social acceptance than the kinds of sins committed. Promiscuity in ancient Rome was much more in the open and enjoyed general public acceptance. Homosexual acts among men were accepted socially. Married men were expected to have trysts. Rape of slaves was a given. In short, the Roman ideal of the conquering male allowed him to exercise a level of sexual exploitation that today would be considered socially unacceptable. That being said, social acceptance is an ever changing thing and what is not acceptable today might be in the future.

### *The example of rome's leaders*

The clearest picture of how open and sanctioned immoral behavior was in Roman culture can be seen in the lives of the Caesars. A country's leaders tend to reflect the moods and attitudes of prevailing culture and set the tone for society. Leaders are both watched and emulated. At this point in our American history, one can see public figures falling all over themselves to make statements that support homosexuality because the public trend is toward the acceptance of it. They wish to identify with the perceived majority to secure favor with the masses and thus ensure their future election. That is how politics work. In emulating culture, they also further those agendas that they emulate. More people jump on the bandwagon because the officials they like have shown support for this or that cause. The same dynamic was at work in Rome.

A culture of promiscuity produced leaders who were promiscuous, which furthered the agenda of sexual immorality, which led to leaders who were even more immoral. It was a vicious circle. As will be shown below, the sexual immorality of Rome was part of a much greater objectification of human beings. A review of some of the key leaders of Rome during the time of Christ and apostles shows not only a pattern of

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<sup>24</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Key Statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth," [www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key\\_statistics/n.htm#numberlifetime](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/n.htm#numberlifetime) (accessed February 3, 2016).

sexual promiscuity among Roman leaders but an utter disregard for life and the dignity of others. The Caesars reflected the mind of the people, and the people reflected the mind of the Caesars.

The Roman biographer Suetonius (AD 69–122) wrote about the lives of the first twelve Caesars. Modern scholarship has pointed out that some of the stories he relates about the Caesars may be anecdotal—meaning that some of them may be exaggerated stories that were floating around in public conversation. Others, however, believe that much of what he wrote is factual. Whether all of what he wrote is one-hundred percent accurate or not is beside the point; what matters is that his writings reflect the public perception of these men that was influencing society at the time. The stories of their sexual exploits shaped culture as well as reflected it.

### CAESAR AUGUSTUS (31 BC–AD 14)

Caesar Augustus was the leader of Rome when Jesus was born. Augustus is often portrayed as one of the most fair-minded and level-headed of all the Caesars. His rule, which lasted forty years, was looked upon as a model for others to emulate. Yet, Augustus's sexual exploits were well-known by the general public.

Sextus Pompey reproached him with being an effeminate fellow; and M. Antony, with earning his adoption from his uncle by prostitution. Lucius Antony, likewise Mark's brother, charges him with pollution by Caesar; and that, for a gratification of three hundred thousand sesterces, he had submitted to Aulus Hirtius in the same way, in Spain; adding, that he used to singe his legs with burnt nutshells, to make the hair become softer.<sup>25</sup>

There were stories of Augustus inviting senators to dinner, then taking the wife of a senator from the table to his bedroom only to return her with her hair in a mess and her ears glowing red. Suetonius tells of how in his later years, Augustus's wife help him find beautiful young virgins from throughout the empire, who were taken to him to “deflower.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 121.

<sup>26</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 124.

## TIBERIUS (AD 14-37)

Following the death of Augustus, Tiberius reigned. His sexual immorality exceeded Augustus. He is said to have created a new publicly funded office for attending to his sexual pleasures.<sup>27</sup> His retreat on the isle of Capri was created to be a sexual playground for his fantasies.

In his retreat at Capri, he also contrived an apartment containing couches, and adapted to the secret practice of abominable lewdness, where he entertained companies of girls and catamites, and assembled from all quarters inventors of unnatural copulations, whom he called *Spintriae*, who defiled one another in his presence, to inflame by the exhibition the languid appetite. . . . He likewise contrived recesses in woods and groves for the gratification of lust, where young persons of both sexes prostituted themselves in caves and hollow rocks, in the disguise of little Pans and Nymphs.<sup>28</sup>

Tiberius was known to practice pedophilia. He found pretty boys and trained them to swim with him in his pool in perverse ways. They were to swim between his thighs and “nibble on his private parts.” Tacitus supports Suetonius’s claims about the Emperor, recording that Tiberius debauched freeborn children and was guilty of sexual abominations so perverse that new names had to be invented for them.<sup>29</sup> Such unspeakable behavior was not prosecuted. Tiberius was a sexual predator, a rapist, pedophile, and bi-sexual adulterer. He does not seem to have been well-liked by the public. A neighboring king wrote him accusing him of murder, cowardice, and sexual perversity and suggested he kill himself to satisfy the hatred of his own people.<sup>30</sup> Yet Tiberius’s deeds stood without public trial and punishment. This was the Roman Emperor in power when Christ was crucified. When the Jews shouted at Jesus’ trial that they had no king but Caesar (John 19:15), this was the Caesar whom they were willing to serve. Jesus was a greater offense to them than Tiberius.

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<sup>27</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 219.

<sup>28</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> Tacitus, *The Annals, Books IV-VI, XI-XII*, trans. John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 155.

<sup>30</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 233.

## CALIGULA (AD 37-41)

If one were to take a psychopathic serial killer and give him absolute power, one would end up with something like Caligula. Though it was never proven, credible rumors circulated that Caligula was complicit in the death of Tiberius. Publicly, Tiberius was said to die of natural causes, but Caligula was suspected of poisoning him. Caligula was the adopted grandson of Tiberius.

Since the days of Julius, the Caesars were considered divine. Caligula, however, took his divine status to new heights. He ordered all the images of the gods that were famous to be brought from Greece. He then commanded that their heads be removed and carved images of his own head be put on them. Caligula actually had a temple constructed in his own honor, instituted a priesthood to serve there, had a golden idol of himself cast, and developed a sacrificial system devoted to his worship.<sup>31</sup> His golden idol was dressed daily in such a way as to reflect the clothes he normally wore.

Caligula commanded the murder of his brother and forced his father-in-law to commit suicide. He lived incestuously with his sisters. He took one of his sisters, named Drusilla, from her husband and openly lived with her as his wife until her death by an illness. Sex and marriage meant nothing to Caligula. It is reported that he went to a wedding as a guest and had the bride seized and taken to his home where he married her and then came to hate her shortly thereafter.<sup>32</sup>

There are several stories of Caligula inviting married couples to dinner. If one of the wives caught his fancy, he would take her into an adjoining room, rape her, and then come back to dinner and talk openly to his guests about her qualities as a lover. His passions included homosexual acts as well. Caligula reportedly had sex with male actors, freedmen, and hostages. Suetonius relates that Caligula enjoyed cross-dressing.<sup>33</sup>

The most notable aspect of this Caesar was his utter disregard for human life and his cruel inhumanity toward all people. He would order the execution of people brought before him for trial without even hearing

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<sup>31</sup> Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, Volume VII: Books 56–60, trans. by Earnest Cary on the basis of the version of Herbert Baldwin Foster, Loeb Classical Library Volume 175 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 353, 355. Loeb Classical Library® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

<sup>32</sup> Cassius, *Roman History*, Volume VII, 267.

<sup>33</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 286–287.