

Has there ever been someone in your life who could give you “the look”? Without a word, the facial expression directed toward you spoke a clear message. Can you envision the look? What was that look meant to communicate? The right look can stir up a great amount of emotion.

Bob Cooley was a big risk taker. That is what got him involved in Operation GambAt (short for “gambling attorney”). In the 1970’s Cooley established himself as a powerful lawyer in Chicago. In September 1977, the mafia hitman Harry Aleman was on trial. Cooley was approached to “handle” the case, code language for corruption. Cooley was hired to corrupt the justice system in whatever way he could in order to find Harry Aleman not guilty. This was high risk work. When the mob is your boss, your life depends on getting the job done. And if he was caught, he would be the one behind bars. Cooley, the obsessive gambler, accepted the risk. After he skillfully managed to bribe a judge to give a not guilty verdict, he then worked to ensure that this judge would oversee the case. Cooley pulled it off and Harry Aleman walked free. After that major victory, Cooley became the go-to lawyer for the mob. He got the attention of the top man in Chicago’s First Ward, Pat Marcy. Marcy was powerful and scary. Cooley felt like Marcy could read his mind. Over the next decade Cooley made a fortune “fixing” cases for the mob. Guilty people walked free and innocent people were found guilty. All his work had to be done with the highest degree of secrecy. He was paid off in obscure restrooms, his conversations were carried out in code, and every detail of his surroundings was seen with suspicion.

Bob lived a high-risk lifestyle. But the riskiest move Bob would ever make was in March 1986 when he walked into a federal prosecutors office and told him that he had information that could bring down the mob. Once he spoke there was no turning back. Without much forethought Bob turned himself in and became an FBI informant. He continued to work with the mob’s First Ward, only now he was wearing a wire, collecting evidence to bring them down. This was Operation GambAt. He had to draw the mobsters into conversation until he could get them to say something on record that would incriminate them. He was continually suspicious that they were on to him. He expected that at any point he would be killed. Once his recorder slipped out and he thought for sure it was seen. Another time Pat Marcy patted him right on the back where his audio recorder was hidden. Cooley tried to explain that it was a brace for his injured back. But mobsters like Marcy were sharp. Cooley lived in constant anxiety. Eventually Cooley was discovered, and the FBI put him in hiding. Once again, Cooley was the man on the top of the mob’s list, only this time they were not on his side.

Operation GambAt helped to send 24 men to prison including mobsters, and corrupt police officers and judges. One of those was Harry Aleman. Another was Pat Marcy. Cooley experienced some intense moments. Taking the witness stand and making eye contact with Aleman and Marcy were among the most intense of those moments. He was forced to sit in the presence of the men he had betrayed and look them in the eyes.

They glared at Cooley. Those were moments of extreme discomfort. Cooley got “the look” and he knew exactly what it meant.<sup>1</sup>

Like locking eyes with your dad after crashing his Corvette or the first time making eye contact with a significant other after a breakup, uncomfortable emotions emerge when we get the look from someone we have disappointed or betrayed.

Peter experienced that look. In Luke 22:61 Peter and Jesus lock eyes. That very evening Peter had emphatically professed his loyalty to Jesus when he was with Jesus on the Mount of Olives. But in that courtyard, Peter’s loyalty faltered. In that courtyard Peter experienced the look from the one he had betrayed. Let’s enter this story to process our own loyalty to God. Allow the courtyard to be symbolic of the place where your loyalty is tested. Let’s go to that courtyard.

I had the opportunity to visit this excavation site in the Herodian Quarter of Jerusalem preserved as the Wohl Archeological Museum. The museum is a 1<sup>st</sup> century mansion. To enter the museum, you descend underground and back in time. There, underneath Jerusalem, you can explore a 6,000 square foot house.

What makes this subterranean mansion even more interesting is that we have a good idea who lived there. There is a collection of evidence suggesting that this was the home of the high priest. Consider the following evidence for this conclusion:

- This home has evidence of being burned in the first century. We know that fire destroyed the city in 70AD and Josephus tells us that Romans “set fire to the house of Ananias the high priest, and to the palaces of Agrippa and Bernice (Josephus’ War 2.426).
- The home has stone water jars and stone cups that suggest the residence of a priest. Stone was used for ceremonially cleanliness because stone doesn’t absorb. As expressed in John 2:6 “Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing.”
- The home also has multiple private mikvehs. A mikveh is a bath for Jewish ceremonial cleansing.
- It is located in the wealthy Herodian Quarter, west of the Temple Mount. This would have allowed for the High Priest to access the temple easily.

The archeological finding of this mansion suggests this was the home of a priest in the time of Christ. The significance of the home makes a compelling case that it very well could have been the home of Caiaphas. It was a house like this, or perhaps this very one, where Jesus stood trial before the High Priest.

In Luke 22:54 we read that Jesus was taken to “the house of the high priest”. In John 18:13 we read that Jesus was brought “first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year”. And in Matthew 26:57 it is confirmed that Caiaphas

was the high priest. By the time of the third denial Jesus was in the house of Caiaphas (John 18:24,28).

Extra Biblical history confirmed that Caiaphas was indeed the high priest at the time of the death of Christ (AD 18 to 37). Archeology has also given us a glimpse into the historicity of Caiaphas. In 1990, a 1st century ossuary (a bone box) was found with the name Caiaphas inscribed on it. Further evidence that it was Caiaphas the High Priest is that the ossuary was marked by fancy engravings and the bones inside were of a 60-year-old male.

Peter was the one who vowed he would lay down his life for Jesus.

John 13:36-37 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

Peter was the one who had drawn a sword to defend Jesus.

Peter was the one who followed Jesus after he was arrested (Matthew 26:58). Where were the others?

Peter was the loyal one. And he knew it. With his feelings of loyalty, it was hard for him to hear Jesus' prediction that he would deny him.

Luke 22:31-34

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." 33 Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." 34 Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

Verse 55 takes us to the "middle of the courtyard". Mark 14:67 and John 18:18 both state that Peter sought to warm himself by the fire. There, in the middle of the courtyard, Peter uttered his first denial, "Woman, I do not know him." (Verse 56-57). Then a second denial, "Man, I am not" (Verse 58). In that courtyard Peter no longer wanted to identify as a follower of Jesus. He preferred to just be part of the crowd.

When Jesus was on trial his response included the phrases "I have done nothing in secret" and "ask those who heard my teaching". (John 18:19-24). When Jesus was on trial it was Peter's opportunity to testify. Who better to give witness than those who heard his teaching? Peter shrank from that moment.

Then a third denial came, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." (Verses 59 and 60).

There are some interesting added details that we pick up from this story in the other gospel accounts. In John 18:26 the third accusation comes from a servant of the high

priest who was a relative of Malchus, the servant whose ear was cut off. There may have been some added emotion in that relationship. Luke tells the PG version by leaving out the swearing but Mark and Matthew agree that Peter denied knowing Jesus on oath.

Despite the differences in the gospel accounts. All four agree that Peter denied his Lord three times on the night of Jesus' betrayal in the courtyard of the high priest, and that a cock crowed "immediately" after the third denial. Luke tells us that the rooster crowed "while he was still speaking" (Verse 60).

That was an emotional moment. And that is when it happened, the "Lord turned and looked at Peter" (Verse 61). Ellis notes, "No phrase in the Gospels is more charged with feeling than [this]." We know that courtyard was charged with emotion because Peter "went out and wept bitterly." (Verse 62).

Peter would have been aware of the gripping words of Jesus in Matthew 10:32-33, "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

As we have seen, Archeology has uncovered what appear to be the remains of Caiaphas' body and his house. This is where Jesus would have been on trial in Luke 22. Archeology has also uncovered a space of great significance to our story in Luke 22, a courtyard. Outside this mansion is a large courtyard with one particular location where it would have been possible to look into the house. I stood in the spot and tried to imagine the intensity of the moment when Jesus looked at Peter. Our group was given some time for personal reflection in that courtyard. I considered my own vows and failures in my loyalty to Jesus.

The courtyard was a scary place. In the courtyard it wasn't popular to be associated with Jesus. And in the courtyard Peter found his loyalty to Christ sink below his desire for self-preservation.

Have you spent some time in the courtyard? Have you been pressured by life to disassociate yourself with Jesus? Have you felt the loving but betrayed eyes of Jesus connect with yours? Have you been pierced by the look? Have you gone out and wept bitterly?

Jesus knew all about the courtyard when he looked at Peter. He also knew that Peter would have an opportunity to recommit his loyalty.

After his resurrection Jesus locked eyes with Peter again and he asked him if he loved him. He asked three times. Then he reinstated Peter. Judas betrayed Christ and ran away from him. Peter betrayed and ran back. In John 21:15-19 Jesus calls Peter back to loyalty. His call concludes with the words "follow me" (19 and 22).

I invite you to dwell in the discomfort of the look. Don't look away. Pause right there. Let yourself be seen by Jesus. And let yourself see him. What does he see when he looks

at you? What have you experienced in the courtyard? Be honest. More important than what Jesus sees in us is what we see in Jesus. Do you see someone who is angry with your lack of loyalty? Is that look a look of disdain? If Jesus wanted to communicate rejection in that look, he would not have later invited Peter to follow him. When we make eye contact with Jesus and he sees us in the courtyard of our disloyalty, his eyes are filled with love. The look is uncomfortable because it exposes us. But the look is exactly what we need. In the very place where our sin is exposed to God, his love is exposed to us. Don't resist being seen by God. Don't miss seeing the love in his eyes.

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<sup>1</sup> I first heard Bob Cooley's story on the podcast Deep Cover at <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/deep-cover-mob-land/id1520478402>