



English footballers have a reputation for losing penalty shoot-outs. Pressure can lead to failure. To what extent is this true in our spiritual lives?

### Point 1.

Jesus and his followers face an impending and unfolding crisis: betrayal, Jesus' arrest, to be followed by his crucifixion.

Severe trials inherently contain serious temptation – moral and spiritual choices and dilemmas.

We can contrast Peter and Jesus' reaction and conduct when they encounter the trial and temptation of Jesus' arrest. Peter returns to the old well trodden path of violence. How many times had he heard Jesus teach "love your enemies"? Peter, fearful, tells lies and denies knowing his friend.

Jesus is serene and in control. He is determined to endure suffering for the greater good, the salvation of many. In the midst of crisis he shows compassion and love for enemies and for his failing friends.

### Point 2.

Confronted with the magnitude of the cross, Jesus struggled with the temptation to find an easier way. The battle was won as Jesus struggled, in prayer, to align his will with that of the Father. In and through prayer Jesus was strengthened to be able to do God's will.

Jesus is the second Adam. Where the first Adam (and all of us) yielded so easily to temptation, Jesus, the second Adam, did not. Jesus overcame temptation in our place and for us.

### Point 3.

The account of the arrest can be interpreted through the lens of Hebrews 4:14-16. Jesus understands us when we are tempted because he has been there himself. As a result we can confidently approach Jesus and expect from him compassion, grace and mercy.

The time of need referred to in Hebrews could be our need of forgiveness and restoration following a moral or spiritual failure or also our need when facing pressure or a crisis to get through without sinking into moral or spiritual failure. Whatever the case, we are exhorted

to run to Jesus, to pray to Jesus, with that full reassurance that because he is merciful he will minister to us in our need in an appropriate way.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

Think about how Peter reacted to this high pressure crisis. In what ways did he fail to apply teaching that he must have heard from Jesus on numerous occasions?

How do you tend to react in high pressure situations? What "old ways" do you tend to go back to? What elements of Jesus' or the Bible's teaching do you tend to forget?

How did Jesus' reaction to his arrest differ from that of Peter? Was Jesus conduct consistent with his teaching? And how?

(An optional theologically challenging question) Discuss whether Jesus could really have chosen to opt out of the pathway to the cross that lay before him? How do the possible answers affect our view of his authentic humanity and authentic divinity? Do the answers make any difference to our faith and spirituality?

What do we learn about prayer from this account? To what extent do you agree that prayer or lack of it determined Jesus and Peter's conduct in this time of crisis?

Read Hebrews 4: 14-16. How does it help us to know that Jesus has been tempted just as we have?

What can it mean to receive grace and mercy in time of need? How do we gain access to this grace and mercy?