Mark 14:26-42 Not a victim.
Jesus returns with His disciples to the mount of Olives where He tells them that not only will one of them betray him, but all of them are going to desert Him (like sheep scattering when the shepherd is struck down)!
None of them can believe this is true. They all believe that when the time comes, they would rather die than desert their master.
But as Jesus later wrestles in prayer, on the worst night of His life, His disciples simply doze off. They have willing spirits... but their flesh is weak.
Jesus, on the other hand will submit to the will of His Father no matter how dreadful the cup He must drink.

Summary: Even under the most intense pressure, Jesus remains firm in His resolve to go even to the cross. In contrast, we are weak, and therefore must constantly watch and pray.

Q Why do you think that the disciples found it impossible to believe that they would fail their master?

Q How might we fall into the trap of thinking that we are stronger than we are?

Q How does Jesus say we are to stand firm when temptation comes (v38)? How do we do that?

Q Read v35-36. What is the cup that cannot be taken from Jesus? What do you think it was that really filled Jesus with dread?

Q Look again at v21 and v36. Why was Jesus willing to go through with all that lay ahead of Him?

Mark 14:43-52 Hated, Betrayed and deserted
A mob made up of hundreds of armed men, soldiers and temple guard, comes for Jesus in the darkness of the night. They are acting on behalf of the Sanhedrin and they are directed to Jesus by Judas, the traitor.
Judas has agreed to hand over Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the going rate for a slave! It is hard to understand how he could have fallen so low, becoming an instrument of Satan himself.
But even his faithful disciples now also desert Him as they realise that Jesus is going to go willingly with the soldiers. And so the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, is left utterly alone as He now faces the horrors of the cross.

Summary: Even the best of us are weak and prone to fall. But sin, left un-dealt with and unconfessed can eat away at our character and give Satan a foothold in our lives.

Q What do we know about Judas? Were there any warning signs leading up to his betrayal?

Q What privileges did Judas have as a disciple of Jesus? What does this tell us about the reasons that people fall away?

Q How might we guard our hearts against falling away from Christ?
Mark 14:66-65 What’s the Charge?
Jesus is brought to the home of the high priest and put on trial, in the middle of the night, before the Sanhedrin.
They make three attempts to accuse Him of something worthy of death, but no charge sticks except for Jesus’ bold declaration in v62, that he is indeed the Son of the Blessed One, and the ruling Son of Man who they will one day see coming in the clouds of heaven!
It’s a clear declaration of His divinity, and in their eyes it is a horrendous blasphemy – rather than fairly assessing His claim in the light of all He has publically said and done, they decide no more evidence is called for and every man condemns Him to death.

Summary: The trial was fixed from the start. It was all about finding a reason to condemn Jesus (and still today people do the same thing). Jesus will be sentenced to death for speaking only the truth to a group of murderous liars!

Q In what ways is this midnight trial fixed?
Q Read v55-56. Why do you think that they couldn’t get agreement on these accusations?
Q Read v57-59. What are they actually accusing Jesus of here? Look at John 2:18-22. Did Jesus really say that He would destroy the temple? What was He actually talking about?
Q Read v61-64. What is the charge they actually condemn Him for? Why is this ridiculous?
Q How do people use similar tactics to this to eliminate Jesus today?

Mark 14:66-72 Peter’s fall
At the same time that Jesus is undergoing His trial before the Sanhedrin, in the courtyard below, Peter is also undergoing a trial of his own.
On a night that he will always remember, brave and boastful Peter, the chief amongst the disciples categorically and vehemently denies his Lord 3 times!
And as Jesus predicted earlier, as soon as he denies Him, the cockerel crows, the horror of what Peter has done sinks home and he breaks down and weeps.

Summary: We must beware pride and the belief that we in ourselves are strong enough to fight temptation. The truth is that even the strongest of us will stumble and fall into sin, but we can learn from Peter about what leads us there and how to avoid catastrophe.

Q What do we know about Peter so far from Mark’s gospel? What would you say characterises him as an outstanding disciple?
Q How would you describe the contrast between Peter in v31 and Peter in v37-38 and v71?
Q What 5 things led to Peter’s downfall?
How can we learn from where Peter went wrong?
Q Mark does not record Peter’s restoration on the beach in Galilee (see John 21:15ff) but how does he hint at it in 16:7?