

# Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

## Sweat and Prayer

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In the past year, I've begun a reading habit suggested by Matthew Kelly in his book "Rediscover Jesus." Kelly recommends reading the gospels for 15 minutes every day. Truthfully, I didn't find it all that impactful at first. But after a few months, I discovered something. Each time I cycle through the four gospels I notice something new. My most recent discovery came at Luke 22:43-44. Jesus, knowing His arrest is imminent, withdraws to pray:

*"An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."*

Whoa, did you catch that? What, no? Let's rewind for a forensic review.

Much of the analysis of these two verses focus on "His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." Luke the physician is the only one to report this, which leads some to believe Jesus was experiencing a stress-induced medical condition that could cause His sweat to present in the way Luke describes. I believe fixation on that observation distracts from a much more striking phrase:

*"And being in anguish, **He prayed more earnestly...**"*

Jesus prayed more earnestly as the moment of His arrest neared. Some argue "more intensely" is a better translation. Either way, it means the same thing: in this regard, Jesus is just like us! In times of deep distress, His prayer becomes more earnest, more intense. I'm guessing many Bible readers miss how often we read of Jesus praying in the gospels. Jesus being Jesus, it never occurred to me that His prayers might be more genuine and intense at some times than other times. Not to mention the angel that was sent to give Him strength.

Sure, if you or I were facing what Jesus was facing and we knew it, our prayers certainly would become more intense and earnest as the hour drew near. What these verses reveal to me is a reminder that while Jesus is God, He was all too human at that moment. We recognize that His human form suffered the physical pain of crucifixion. Have you ever considered the mental anguish He must have felt knowing exactly how it was going to play out? These verses show us that He was spared that, no more than He was spared the physical suffering. It also reminds me that Jesus not only knows the emotions I feel when I pray for help in desperate times; He's experienced them Himself in a very human way. And He did so at a level you and I almost certainly never will.

So, if you're ever worried that the intensity level of your prayers varies; you can rest assured that Jesus can relate. And you just never know what He'll reveal to you if you visit Him in the gospels 15 minutes a day.