

## *Why I embrace the Cross...*

I embrace the cross because it is a powerful, transforming symbol.

Symbols are making a comeback. Most of us, by age and education, are products of the modern era that taught us that anything worthwhile was measurable. Logic, reason, and science—*not symbols*— were the vehicles that would take us down the road to truth. But ready or not, all that is changing. For we Christians, this can be a very good, timely thing, for we never did hold that science was the ultimate decider of truth in the first place. The modern era did some serious damage to matters of faith. You can't measure God. And you really can't measure a good Christian symbol.

We are now living in a time when much more importance is given to experience, when there is great openness to forms of communication other than the written and spoken word. And that's another remarkable thing about a good symbol: *It speaks volumes without using words.*

This is true of the cross. The cross is the ultimate Christian symbol: It can't be measured, and it speaks volumes without using words.

The cross is an icon in the very best sense of the word. Think of the icon on your computer screen. The computer icon is a little picture that you "click" on with your "mouse" in order to access a software program. The icon isn't the program— *it isn't the destination*— but it points you there. Ascribing power to the symbol rather than the power it points to is kind of like camping out at the road sign that points to the emergency room hoping to get treatment there, rather than going on down the street to the hospital itself.

And yet the cross— *the wonderful cross*— is a transforming, powerful symbol. Ironically, some non-Christians seem to understand this better than we do.

You may have heard of Martin and Gracia Burnham, recent Christian missionaries to the Philippines. Just one year ago, in June of 2002, after months of imprisonment, Martin Burnham and two other hostages were shot to death by members of the Philippine extremist Muslim group called the "Abu Sayyaf." Gracia was the only survivor. Her husband, Martin, was a martyr for the cross.

*Listen to part of Gracia's story:* During their terrifying, year-long hostage ordeal, the Burnhams were marched past predominantly Muslim villages in the southern Philippines. Once, the Abu Sayyaf came across a Christian chapel. "There used to be a cross there, but we destroyed it," one of the rebels proudly told the missionaries. "We hate the cross. Any time we see a cross we destroy it if we can." Gracia says she was never "a real cross fan" before her abduction. "I was raised a Baptist, and that always seemed to be Catholic to me. But I love the cross since my captivity, and I have it everywhere," she says. "My mind has changed because the Muslims hated it so much, what it stands for."

The cross stands for something; and it points to *Someone*. You and I used to be captives, too. And the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross set us free. What a powerful, transforming symbol.

That's why I embrace the cross.