

# maybe

a community  
following in the way of Jesus  
by prayer and action  
for a better world now

## THE TILlich 'COURAGE-TO-BE' SERIES [3] ACCEPTANCE

Accept that you are accepted  
although you are unacceptable  
*P. Tillich 'The Courage to Be'*



*gerbera in summer*

### • PAUL TILlich

We continue our series working with the writings of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) - pastor, philosopher, political rebel and theological radical. As a young theology lecturer in Germany prior to the 2nd World War he courageously and dangerously propagated anti-Nazi writings. This formative experience can be traced throughout his life's work, particularly in his determined focus upon the theme of courage.

In this series we are exploring what different and often surprising shapes a courageous life can take...

### • SCRIPTURE RESOURCES

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.'  
*Jeremiah 1: 4-5*

Accept one another, then, for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you.  
*Romans 15: 7*

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
*Matthew 5*

### • OTHER RESOURCES

As for others and the world around him he never ceased in his heroic and earnest endeavour to love them, to be just to them, to do them no harm, for the love of his neighbour was as strongly forced upon him as the hatred of himself, and so his whole life was an example that the love of one's neighbour is not possible without love of oneself, and that self-hate is really the same thing as sheer egoism, and in the long run breeds the same cruel isolation and despair.  
*Description of Harry Haller, character in 'Steppenwolf' by Herman Hesse*

The act of self-acceptance is the root of all things. I must agree to be the person who I am. Agree to have the qualifications which I have. Agree to live within the limitations set for me... The clarity and the courageousness of this acceptance is the foundation of all existence.

*Romano Guardini,  
from his essay 'The Acceptance of Oneself'*

### • DISCUSSION RESOURCE

+ Do you know of any books or films which explore themes of self acceptance?

+ In most social environments it is more acceptable to be self-deprecating and self-effacing than display any kind of obvious self-acceptance. How do these social habits shape the way we interpret ourselves and our behaviour?

+ It is often easier to be courageous with something obvious and external than with our internal selves, our secret selves, the thoughts and actions that other people never see. Tillich envisages a courageous attitude towards ourselves as one of acceptance – accepting that we are acceptable. Herman Hesse claims that self-love can truly enable love of others, whilst "self-hate is really the same thing as sheer egoism". Do you agree?

+ We usually think of Jesus's words in Matthew 5 as being about our [potential] attitude to others. But can we apply them to the way that we think of ourselves? Can we be merciful, pure in heart and peace-making towards ourselves? How might that change us?

Liza Thompson 9 August 07 [www.maybe.org.uk](http://www.maybe.org.uk)