FIVE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

A series of sermons preached by Dr. Royal F. Shepard, Jr. at Pilgrim Congregational Church, Duluth in September and October, 1975.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago it occurred to me that much of our talk about the Christian life is too vague and nebulous. I was very suspicious of "simple formulas" and various verbal gimmicks that try to sum up Christian living in a superficial way. But I felt that we might profit, if like A.A. in its well-known program, we tried to outline a few basic steps that go into the sort of personal relationship with God described in the Bible and evidenced in Christian experience.

So in the fall of 1958, when I was minister of the First Congregational Church of Watertown, Wisconsin, I preached a series of sermons on what I called "The Five R's" or "Some Basic Steps in Effective Religion." Accompanying each sermon was an outline of each step, listing specific things to do.

Recently I came across copies of most of those old outlines. Now that we have entered a time once again when many individuals are looking for ways of renewing their faith, I thought that these "Five R's" might prove useful again. I prepared a completely new set of sermons on each theme but had the old outlines duplicated for insertion in our Sunday bulletins. Since the outline on "Responsibility" was missing, I created a new one along lines similar to the others.

As I have noted in one or two of the sermons, I think it is better to refer to these spiritual acts as "dimensions" or "elements" in Christian living rather than as "steps." All of them should occur and re-occur in the ongoing process of discipleship. Indeed, I had the same thought in mind in 1958 when I told the people in Watertown, "the person who for years has 'committed his way unto the Lord' will find himself constantly retracing these same steps, only on a different level." And I wish to emphasize now my concluding word of introduction then:

"They are not something to be read or listened to, but something to do."