



# **In His Steps (Authorized Edition)**

Charles M. Sheldon

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In His Steps takes place in the railroad town of Raymond, presumably located in the eastern U.S.A. (Chicago, IL and the coast of Maine are mentioned as being accessible by train). The main character is the Rev. Henry Maxwell, pastor of the First Church of Raymond, who challenges his congregation to not do anything for a whole year without first asking: "What Would Jesus Do?" Other characters include Ed Norman, senior editor of the Raymond Daily Newspaper, Rachel Winslow, a talented singer, and Virginia Page, an heiress, to name a few. The novel begins on a Friday morning when a destitute vagabond appears at the front door of Henry Maxwell while the latter is preparing for that Sunday's upcoming sermon. Maxwell listens to the vagabond's helpless plea briefly before curtly brushing him away and closing the door. The same vagabond appears in church at the end of the Sunday sermon, walks up to "the open space in front of the pulpit," and faces the people. No one stops him. He quietly but frankly confronts the congregation-"I'm not complaining; just stating facts."-about their compassion, or lack thereof, for the homeless like him in Raymond. Upon finishing his address to the congregation, he collapses and dies a few days later. That next Sunday, Henry Maxwell, deeply moved by the events of the past week, presents a challenge to his congregation: "Do not do anything without first asking, 'What would Jesus do?" This challenge is the theme of the novel and is the driving force of the plot. From this point on, the rest of the novel consists of certain episodes that focus on individual characters as their lives are transformed by the challenge.



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