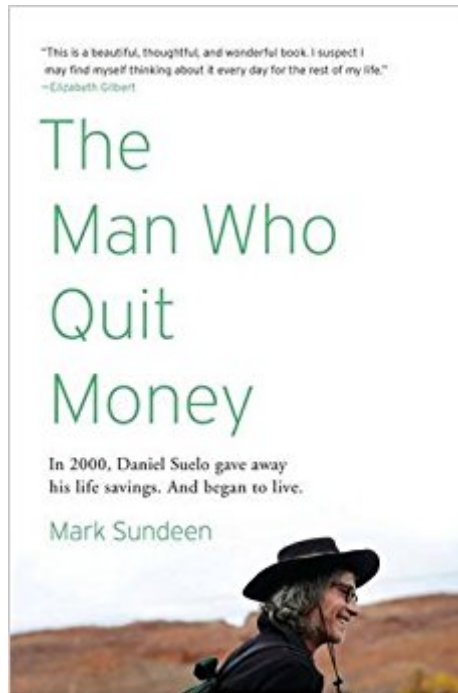




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The Man Who Quit Money



Synopsis

Grand Prize Winner of the 2015 Green Book Festival – Mark Sundeen's new book, *The Unsettlers*, is coming in January 2017 from Riverhead Books. In 2000, Daniel Suelo left his life savings—all thirty dollars of it—in a phone booth. He has lived without money—and with a newfound sense of freedom and security—ever since. *The Man Who Quit Money* is an account of how one man learned to live, sanely and happily, without earning, receiving, or spending a single cent. Suelo doesn't pay taxes, or accept food stamps or welfare. He lives in caves in the Utah canyonlands, forages wild foods and gourmet discards. He no longer even carries an I.D. Yet he manages to amply fulfill not only the basic human needs—for shelter, food, and warmth—but, to an enviable degree, the universal desires for companionship, purpose, and spiritual engagement. In retracing the surprising path and guiding philosophy that led Suelo into this way of life, Sundeen raises provocative and riveting questions about the decisions we all make, by default or by design, about how we live—and how we might live better.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This is a beautiful, thoughtful and wonderful book. I suspect I may find myself thinking about it every day for the rest of my life." - Elizabeth Gilbert

Mark Sundeen's astonishing and unsettling book goes directly to the largest questions about how we live and what we have lost in a culture obsessed with money. Sundeen tells the story of a gentle and generous man who sought the good life by deciding to live without it. What's most unsettling and astonishing is that he appears to have

succeeded." - William Greider "Maybe it's just this odd, precarious moment we live in, but Daniel Suelo's story seems to offer some broader clues for all of us. Mark Sundeen's account will raise subversive and interesting questions in any open mind." - Bill McKibben "Suelo isn't a conflicted zealot, or even a principled aesthete. He's a contented man who chooses to wander the Earth and do good. He's also someone you'd want to have a beer with and hear about his life, as full of fortune and enlightenment as it is disappointment and darkness. At its core, *The Man Who Quit Money* is the story of a man who decided to live outside of society, and is happier for it. Men's Journal "Sundeen deftly portrays [Suelo] as a likeable, oddly sage guy who finds happiness in radical simplicity [and] personifies a critique that will resonate with anyone who has ever felt remorse on the treadmill of getting and spending." Outside Magazine "Captivating Suelo emerges as a remarkable and complex character Sundeen brings his subject vividly to life [and] makes a case for Suelo's relevance to our time. The Seattle Times "Exquisitely timed The Man Who Quit Money is a slim, quick read that belies the weightiness underneath. The very quality that makes us see a 'man walking in America' (Suelo's words) and be simultaneously attracted and repelled is exposed here in beautiful detail. The Missoula Independent "In America, renunciation breaks the rules, but, as everyone evicted from Zuccotti Park or bludgeoned at Berkeley or just steamed in-between knows, the rules require breaking. Sundeen sets out to understand the process and logic behind a money-free lifestyle while tracing the spiritual, psychological, physical, and philosophical quest that led this particular man to throw over our society's arguably counterfeit-yet-prevailing faith in money, or, more precisely, in debt. The Rumpus "A fascinating subject both resonant as a character study and infinitely thought-provoking in its challenge to all our preconceptions about modern life and about the small and large hypocrisies people of all philosophies and religious paths assume they need to accept. The Salt Lake City Weekly "Thoughtful and engrossing biography that also explores society's fixation with financial and material rewards...Although few readers will even consider emulating Suelo's scavenger lifestyle, his example will at least provoke some serious soul-searching about our collective addiction to cash. Booklist

Mark Sundeen is an award-winning writer whose nonfiction has appeared in *The New York Times*

Magazine, Outside, National Geographic Adventure, and The Believer. He is the author of Car Camping (HarperCollins, 2000) and The Making of Toro (Simon & Schuster, 2003), and co-author of North by Northwestern (St. Martin's, 2010), which was a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller. He has taught fiction and nonfiction in the MFA programs at the University of New Mexico and Western Connecticut State University. He lives in Montana and Utah.

First off, this is not a survivalist book or story. It is the life story of one man and his experiences told through the eyes and experiences of the author, other people the author interviewed and from the writings of the subject himself. It starts with him living without money but almost immediately becomes a tale of how he got to that point in his life - his mental thoughts and travels and various attempts to become one who can live moneyless. Although he himself quits money his entire story is one of a person living off of the largess of money and what it can and does buy - basically the excess of capitalism, without which he would not have been able to do what he has. Keep in mind that this is not a "formula to" book. The reality is his story is one of lifestyle choice. One can choose to live a life of less income or pursue one of more income. The reality is the lifestyle(s) that go with those varying degrees of income are the output, some may say consequences, of those choices. Towards the end the author gets into the typical platitudes that predict things like peak oil and the downfall of the American capitalistic system, citing specific occurrences that never resulted in the social impact the author predicts. As for the writing I found it moved the story along - in the beginning slowly, the main part of the book at a nice pace, with the ending slowed down again. The author did a good job keeping things interesting but quite often I felt like he was either overdramatizing the incidents or relating stories that the subject presented without questioning their authenticity or degree of reality (especially the religious moments).

Life on his own terms . . . Freedom at a price. Here are a few alternative titles for this book:- 21st Century Hunter-Gatherers. - Religion of Poverty. - Boycott Everything. - Spiritual Lives of Spiders. - The Kindness of Nature. - Taking Life in Trade. - Desert Rats. - Gone Native. This is a man who sought AND FOUND a place where he could live in relative happiness and freedom - without hurting anyone else. This is truly heroic.

This is a well-written biography of a man that decided to live his convictions. Much of the book is about how he arrived at his choice to give up money. I found the book just fascinating and thought provoking.

I found out about this book when my girlfriend and I were camping in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We awoke in the morning, and were about to head out to the 2016 Tiny House Jamboree, when we started chatting with a fellow camper named Mark. Turns out he was an author which is great because I love to read. When I asked him what he'd written he pulled out this book *The Man Who Quit Money*. When we parted ways I did so with the promise that I'd read his book. I got back to Ohio and downloaded the Kindle edition and read it all the way through. This story captivated me. I was already a minimalist, living my life with very few possessions, but this has made me question the make believe monetary system we're all mental slaves to. Thank you Mark, and above all Daniel, for this truly inspiring story. I'm going to tell everyone I know to read this book!

BOOK REVIEW: It is an honor to be called "Daniel's best friend" in this gripping book about him. The author, Mark Sundeen, recounts how Daniel Suelo learned to live abundantly by rejecting our cultural beliefs about money. Daniel and I were roommates at the University of Colorado 25 years ago and have remained close ever since, living in the same tiny town in the desert. So the stories in this book are familiar and dear to me. Sundeen describes Daniel's many adventures with vivid detail and incredulous mirth, letting the reader decide if he is a Prophet for our times or just a lovable, amusing and interesting bum. In my opinion, Sundeen makes a serious case for how Suelo contends for the Dos Equis beer title of "the most interesting man in the world," as he barely wins all-out fistfights with Death and personal demons on glaciers in Alaska, in a monastery in Thailand, high in a redwood tree in Oregon, in a remote village in Ecuador, and finally atop one of Colorado's highest peaks. Sundeen also captured the highlights of each major stage in Daniel's spiritual life, showing his growth from an enthusiastic fundamentalist to a serious Old Testament scholar to a mystical cultural anthropologist to a gifted student of world religion to a disillusioned social worker to a desert naturalist to a beloved hobo to a profound visionary in our troubled economic times. Moreover, Sundeen paints Daniel's portrait against the canvas of recent social and financial trends in America. He interrelates trickle-down Reaganomics, the rise of neo-Conservatism, the Religious Right and multinational corporations with the Occupy movement, the Rainbow gathering, environmental activism, social welfare programs, the growing rich-poor gap and "freegans" around the world. Before reading this book, it never occurred to me how Daniel's life has consistently reflected the zeitgeist of our age. Sundeen's compact writing style captures with elegant detail and juicy phrases the experiences, people, emotions and philosophies that have guided Daniel's lifelong quest. To summarize Teilhard de Chardin in a page or two is a feat of literary genius. Similarly, the

influence of Professor Brian Mahan on our mutual spiritual development, evidenced by the reading list for his Psychology of Religion class, cannot be overestimated. Sundeen artfully portrays him and the other characters I know, illustrating their dignity and wisdom with appropriate humor and their foibles and frustrations with kindness.

CORRECTIONS:For readers interested in picayune details, here are the few inaccuracies related to my role in Daniel's life, none of which detracted from the story: 1) The Russian chess player Igor Ivanov who spent the whole night drinking vodka and arguing politics with Matthew was not just a master but an international grandmaster, the strongest chess player ever to live in Utah. 2) I was living in California when my ex-girlfriend Linda awoke at three in the morning with a house full of smoke and a small fire burning through the floor where Daniel and Matthew left a candle unattended. She was livid the next day, especially because the imported rug had been a very sentimental gift from my mother. Expecting an apology from Daniel, instead she received a rebuke about being too attached to material objects. To this day she accuses me of taking Daniel's side over hers, so the emotional tension portrayed by Sundeen is quite accurate, showing the reader that some rough spots existed in Daniel's path toward becoming the compassionate sadhu he is today. But 3) Linda and I did not split up over this incident. Also, 4) the coffee-table that covered the hole in the rug was not Daniel's attempt to hide his mistake, as the text implies, but my own humorous solution for "fixing" the whole situation several weeks later. Finally, 5) the verb "to hump" is not in my vocabulary, according to my wife, and I am embarrassed by the quotation attributed to me. If I said something like it in our whirlwind 3-hour interview I apologize to the reader and to Mark. But again Sundeen's main point is completely correct, highlighting the awkwardness between two sensual young men, one gay and one heterosexual, who truly love each other after many years of deep friendship and intentional celibacy through college.

ADDITIONS:The remainder of this review adds details to the book, filling out little parts of Daniel's story that feel important to me, thus completing Sundeen's nearly perfect book. 1) We had a third college roommate who committed suicide two years after leaving Boulder for California. His completely unexpected death had an enormously painful impact on both of us, as well as others in the circle of friends like Dawn and Rebecca. In dark and mysterious ways his suicide contributed to Daniel's own deep despair about life, especially because it had undercurrents of emerging homosexual feelings against a protestant belief system. For many of us in the Boulder community, Daniel's later attempt was a second sign that American society had become too poisonous for beautiful, complex souls to endure. 2) I had hoped to see some of Daniel's original artwork reprinted in the book, because his images are even more moving than his words. Especially his pen and ink renderings, and the drawings he created while in the Peace Corps in Ecuador. Maybe somebody

will take them out of my guest room closet, scan them, and with Daniel's permission put them online for the whole world to see.³) The music and poetry of the Canadian folk singer Bruce Cockburn was a big part of our college years, and in many ways Suelo's adventures -- mental, emotional, spiritual and physical -- have paralleled Cockburn's. The rock band U2 was also important to our spiritual development.⁴) Because of his keen mind and scholarly background, Daniel has been asked to edit the works of other authors in fields like anthropology, archaeoastronomy, sociology and religion. He perceives, thinks and talks much like the mystical anthropologist Joseph Campbell, and so his feedback is cherished.⁵) My wife Dorina Krusemer-Nash observed, "When I first met Daniel we didn't get along and frankly I didn't like him. He was depressed, sullen and bitter. But when he came back to Moab, after finally quitting money, it was like a huge weight had been lifted off of his spirit, and he was light, energetic and funny." Dorina's perspective brings up an enormous social issue: What is the relationship between rampant, clinical depression, our mass addiction to anti-depressant medications, and economic injustice in a capitalistic society? What toll does it take on each of us, and on our world, when so many of us feel forced into a lifetime of near slavery wages to pay for groceries, health care and (if lucky enough) a mortgage?

CONCLUSION: The book is great! Buy it and enjoy it. Regarding Daniel himself, my personal conclusion was published on the Matador Change website in 2009, after an article that openly wondered if Daniel was a "mooch" on society. Although the question raised my hackles, the posts on that article were noticeably less hostile and more thoughtful than posts to other online articles, so Daniel and I both contributed to the thread. Because the "mooching" question is the first reaction so many people have when they read about him, I conclude this review with a heartfelt response: "Although Daniel tries never to barter, at one level he does participate in the same kind of barter system known for centuries to Franciscan and Buddhist monks. His mere presence in our house adds rich value to the quality of life that my wife and I enjoy. He brings peace with him wherever he goes. We adore him, and so do all of our animals, whom he often 'babysits' when we travel. You could even say our many dozens of organic fruit and nut trees adore Daniel. He has helped prune and cultivate them over the years, thoroughly enjoyed long afternoon naps in a hammock in their fragrant shade, and savored their bounty with a kind of deep, mystical appreciation that few of us humans ever really feel." If anyone could call Daniel a 'mooch' it would be me and Dorina because our home (and refrigerator) are always and unconditionally open to him. Yet we have never felt mooched, or taken advantage of. Quite the opposite, we look forward to his arrivals, feel enriched during his stays and, like our dogs, we are saddened by his departures. After wiping a few counters, we often find extra food he left behind. Daniel is not a weight on society, holding us all back, making us work harder to support his

loading, as the word 'mooch' implies. Instead, he is more like a quiet angel who asks for nothing, but lifts us all up gently with his peacefulness, kindness, cantankerous humor and nature-based wisdom."Maybe it's time to turn around the question of 'mooching.' How many people in the world who enjoy great material wealth also have an endless supply of love, wisdom, inner peace and happiness that they share freely with everyone around them? Daniel has made many brave decisions and great personal sacrifices in his life to follow Christ's teachings and trust the Holy Spirit to guide him. As a result, he has become a visionary and saintly person, a humble hobo who happens to have direct, broadband access to God. Now the rest of us get to 'mooch' off of his free internet wi-fi connection to heaven whenever he is around."

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