

February 8, 1985

Sus, France

Beginnings

Dear Susan,

It is difficult to know how to start this letter because I realize that you don't even know me at all, and may feel that it is a little strange getting such a long letter from a total stranger. But even though I don't know you personally; I have heard a lot about you from our brothers in the community in Island Pond. They had told my husband and me all about your visit with them. They have also sent us the article that you wrote about the community in the Vanguard Press.

I am the wife of Elbert Spriggs, a name that I am sure you are familiar with. We are now living in France in a community very similar to the one you visited in Island Pond. I have just finished reading the article you wrote in the newspaper for the second time. I am even more amazed this time than I was the first time I read it at the accurate and just account you gave of our life there. This is so amazing to me because, as I am sure you are well aware of, we usually get such biased and unfair press coverage. Though we don't often read the articles people write about us, the brothers in Island Pond sent us the one you wrote along with an article from the New England Monthly (December '84) and one from the Yankee (January '85). The contrast between your article and the other two was mind-boggling.

How could it be that those other two magazines would write such distorted half-truths? I don't believe that the character of those magazines was usually like that of the National Inquirer, yet that is exactly what their articles were written like. It seems as if they DELIBERATELY painted a picture of horror about our life in the Community. But why?? What was their motivation? We even wondered if perhaps those authors were paid by the state officials to make up this horrid account in order to try to cover over their Gestapo tactics in dealing with us. Of course, that is only a speculation, and it really does no good at all to speculate. But it is so hard for me to understand why people

would say such things about us if they had actually seen with their own eyes how we truly live. For example: “And all I saw in Island Pond were secure, happy, radiantly healthy, bright children.” (Vanguard Press) “Cult children are not like other children. Their expressions are both vacant and watchful; they are preternaturally grave ... it reminded me — though I am not given to hysteria — of a scene from *Village of the Damned*.” (New England Monthly)

How is it that these accounts of our life can be so vastly different? I think in your article you commented that you thought the life in Island Pond would remind someone more of “The Little House on the Prairie.” That is surely a far cry from “Village of the Damned.” And that is only one of the many examples I could give. Do you wonder why we have had to take such a strong stand about talking to reporters in the past? Then a nice person like you comes along and we get a little false hope that maybe some justice can still be found in that system which you are a part. We open up our lives a bit to others who SEEM just as nice as you, but we find that in reality they were vicious, false accusers. These are surely very difficult times...

This whole idea of persecution was a real surprise to me when we first began to experience it. It seemed to just begin out of nowhere about 10 years ago or so when we were still living in Tennessee. I guess I must have read about it in the Bible before that but all that seemed to be something that happened to other people in other times. Surely not now in the 20th century. But then the words of the scriptures came to life:

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you ... If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you ... But all these things will they do to you for My name’s sake ... that the word be fulfilled that was written in the Law, ‘They hated Me without cause’ ...” (John 15)

“Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall reproach you, and say all

manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake ... for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you...”

So, though I still find it very hard to understand, I really shouldn't be surprised by what has come upon is in the last several years, for we were forewarned about all of this.

From what I have heard about you and from many of the things you mentioned about yourself in your article it seems that you are a rather unique sort of person and I hope we will get to know more about you in the times to come. I hop the “revelation” you spoke of in your article has been one of lasting effect and not just a passing feeling. I wanted to share with you a little bit about how our life here began here so that you could understand more about the foundation of what you saw during your visit with the community. So many things in life are just “passing” experiences because they have no firm foundation. People take up various behaviors because it is popular at the time, but are quick to change with the styles. Our life is not built upon such a principle.

I, personally, was not raised knowing anything about the Bible [unlike Elbert who was raised in the ‘Bible Belt’]. I came from California and could count on one hand the times I even went into a church as a child. Then when I went to college, through various philosophy courses, I was convinced that there was NO GOD at all. The fruit I saw from the churches was rotten. The lifestyle of those who called themselves Christians proved to me that they did not really believe what they said they did. For if there was some all-powerful, all-seeing God up in the sky somewhere and they actually knew Him as they claimed, surely their lives would be different than mine. But I saw their mundane daily routine, their empty expressions, their ambitions, and their pleasures to be just the same as mine — except for a once a week visit to some building which assured them a “ticket to heaven” someday. Well, that was fine for them, but personally I preferred to sleep in late on Sunday morning.

It was about at this time in my life when John Lennon's song “Imagine there's no heaven...” came out. The lyrics of that song summed up my philosophy just right. I didn't

just like the song because it was POPULAR or because it had a nice beat, but I really felt it deep in my soul. I really wanted to see “brotherhood of man” as the song said. So I set out to find that very thing.

I quit college, not just because that was the popular thing to do in those days, but because I really felt the emptiness of just being number 8867237 on my student ID card. I really wanted to see a change come about in the relation of one to another, yet I felt myself drowning in the crowded halls of the college campus, rushing passed hundreds of vacant-looking faces, trying to pass out plastic smiles to the selected few. There was much TALK in those days about LOVE but I really wanted to see this talk put into action.

I moved with some friends to the Rocky Mountains to a small, unexploited ski village. We found many others there who were trying to “get back to nature”, to be real, and to really LIVE. It was a beautiful setting. Perhaps we had found UTOPIA! My friends and I sought for peace. We listened to the prophets of the day: Dylan, Lennon, Judy Collins etc. And we dreamed lofty dreams — not just because it was the popular thing to do in those days. I did it because my soul was touched with a longing for a better way of life.

But soon Big Business moved into my Utopia. A rich businessman from south Georgia bought practically the whole ski village and began building mass condominium projects and importing Southerners on economy priced ski package plans. (After seeing ‘Easy Rider’ all these Southerners were more than I could take!) I saw my dream trampled under the ski boots of ‘weekend skiers’ with southern drawls in expensive ski togs — representing all the things I most detested in society. All of us began to pull up stakes and move, pursuing our dreams elsewhere. But somehow the impetus was waning in most people’s hearts now. Even the music had changed. The lyrics were now light — speaking of romance and trivial things. The mood was becoming apathetic. Even Bob Dylan was gone. The beetles couldn’t even stay together. So many new groups surfaced on the music scene trying to make a million dollars and a name for themselves that I

couldn't keep up with them anymore. Many of my friends seemed to be exchanging their passions for a mild form of conformity. I really hated that! My goals hadn't changed. Why did the others give up so easily? I guess it was because they had only been doing it because it was POPULAR at the time. But now it wasn't popular anymore. Passion for justice and love were going out of style. But what I felt in my soul didn't change with the styles.

Then I met Elbert. He was a man with passion — but also a man wearing two things which greatly offended me: 1) a southern drawl; 2) a Bible. Yet even through my offense I could see that the God he spoke of was nothing like the one I had cast off as a myth in my early college days. When he spoke to me about the love of God's Son for mankind and about the justice which His Words called for, I couldn't help but listen. This man, who Elbert at that time called Jesus Christ, spoke of establishing a society which was like everything I had always dreamed of. But why had I never seen it demonstrated? Why was it that all I had ever seen were 'Sunday-go-to meeting' Christians dressed up in fancy clothes, going into elaborate buildings called churches (even countries racked w/ poverty)? For these questions Elbert had no answers, for he as of yet knew little about the bad foundation of the religious system as we see it today. All he knew was the Saviour of the world, who really saves and restores any man who sincerely calls out to Him — he knew that from his own experience, so that is what he shared with me. He would tell me, "It isn't the fault of our Saviour that Christianity has become this way in the last 2000 years!"

I could not ignore the great truth I was hearing. I embraced the faith of the One in whom I saw mankind's only hope — Jesus Christ (whom I now know as Yahshua the Messiah).

Shortly after this, Elbert and I were married and moved to Tennessee, where he hoped to patch up what he could of the mess he had made of his life there in the past. For though Elbert had been raised in a very religious family and had tried to be a 'good

Christian' in his youth — the temptations of his teenage years drew him away from the simple faith which his father had taught him. In his heart he knew that the Son of God held true salvation for mankind. Yet the many church services and revivals his family attended in the rural Southern environment in which he was raised grew boring to him. The pull of his friends and his sudden popularity as a high school football hero overwhelmed him. He entered into the life of parties and 'good times' — against his better judgment, and with his conscience continually nagging at him.

His own insecurities along with his deep inner desire to “do the right thing” led Elbert into three unsuccessful, short-lived marriages in the years that followed.

After graduating from college he worked as a teacher and a guidance counselor in a local high school for a couple of years there in his hometown on the outskirts of Chattanooga, Tennessee. But then he was offered the position of personal manager in a large carpet producing plant. He began to move up the 'success ladder', and it appeared that he would really make it big in the world of the white-collar executives. Yet his tormented conscience was ever present with him. He hated the 'pecking order' of big business. He wasn't satisfied.

Then Elbert was offered the 'dream job' as a director for big tours to Hawaii, Las Vegas, etc. It paid lots of money, plus he could see the world at the same time. He couldn't resist this opportunity, thinking that surely he would find satisfaction doing this. He left his secure executive position with all its benefits, and took off to follow the American dream. But it didn't take long for him to wake up from his dream. He was faced with the reality of trying to please these many fussy, rich vacationers. He saw the corruption involved in trying to give a good time on their tour, while at the same time subtly pressuring them for a bigger tip at the end of their trip. Elbert wasn't satisfied there either.

Somehow Elbert just wasn't able to fit in to any of the standard molds of this society's normal citizens.

After quitting his job with the tour company, he went into a business venture with some of his friends back home. This was a complete flop, so Elbert decided to just take off and travel for a while. He headed out west, but on the way he met up with a friend of his who ran a big carnival which operated in the South and Mid-West. Just for the ‘experience’ of it all, Elbert decided to work there in the carnival for two or three weeks. It was there at that carnival that he really saw the degradation of humanity in all its grotesqueness. There in the midst of a midway full of freaks of every sort, the Holy Spirit of God spoke to him deeply in his heart saying, “Is this what I have created you for?” Seeing the corruption all around him, along with the emptiness and vanity of his own life, he had to answer, “No!” He knew that he was far, far from living a life that would be pleasing to the God who created the heavens and the earth and every living creature.

Elbert cried out that day to truly be saved from this wicked society in which he was so trapped, and also to be saved from the wickedness in his own heart. He wanted to truly live for the purpose for which he was created. He left the carnival that day, filled with a fervent desire to find that purpose for which his God had created him

(This is surely another example of the gross distortions of the press coverage we receive. For when the media begins talking about him, they almost always say, “Elbert Spriggs, former carnival barker...” His three-week fling at the carnival has permanently tagged him as a *former carnival barker*. Why don’t they say, “Elbert Spriggs, former secretary of the Rotary Club,” or, “Elbert Spriggs, former high school teacher,” both of which he did for a much greater time than two or three weeks?)

From there Elbert headed to California where he found the Jesus Movement of the early 70s in full swing. He saw an excitement there among the people involved in that movement which he had never seen in all of his religious childhood. So he tried to fit in there, praising the Lord, witnessing on the streets, and passing out Jesus tracts with all the other many young people. But after just a short time he realized that for most of those involved in that movement, what they were doing was not coming from a deep

conviction of their heart, but it was just a fad. It was popular in California in those days to be a Jesus freak, so all of their outward zeal, which Elbert so admired, was really little more than a fading ember. But what had begun in Elbert's heart that day in the carnival midway was far from fading. It was growing brighter and brighter as the days passed.

Hearing that in the mountains there were many people who had dropped out of this society's traditional lifestyles and were trying to live a more natural life and seek peace, Elbert took off again for the Rockies. He hoped that there he would find people who might be interested in hearing the good news about the salvation which he had found in Jesus, the Savior of the world. There in the mountains he found me.

Neither of us had any idea of the wonderful life which would open up before us in the years to come. All we knew was that we had been set free from slavery to a drab, mundane existence of a purposeless life. We knew that we had been created for a purpose, and that is all we wanted to do — fulfill the purpose for which we were created. Yet Elbert also knew that he had left behind in Tennessee many things that were unresolved — people he had wronged, debts unpaid, etc. He felt he could not go on and devote himself to the purpose of his God until his conscience was completely clear.

So we returned to Tennessee together. In my flesh Tennessee was surely the last place on earth that I would choose to live, prejudiced as I was in my pseudo-liberal, California-style upbringing. But now I realized that my life was no longer my own to choose my fleshly preferences. I had been bought with a great price by the blood of the Son of God and I no longer wanted to live for myself, but for Him who loved me and gave Himself for me so I could be saved.

When we arrived in Tennessee, I had to bear the reproach of being wife #4 among Elbert's old friends. But as they began to see the change in Elbert's life, they all came to realize that I was truly the only woman he had ever really married.

We both got jobs there and soon all the debts were paid and all the wrongs were righted (as much as possible). We began going to the many, many denominational

churches there during this time. Our zeal for the Lord attracted much attention within the dull, sleepy institution. We carried within ourselves a vain hope that perhaps, if they saw our devotion, that they too would wake up to the great salvation that they supposedly possessed. We also opened the door of our house to anyone who wanted to come and learn about the joys of knowing the Savior of the world. Many young people were drawn to us. We started having little meetings in our living room to just sing and talk about Jesus. We became very popular with everyone. Many teenagers quit taking drugs and became good kids because of coming to our house, so people thought we were doing a great work. Every Sunday we would bring a truckload of young people to the different churches we would attend ... and everyone was happy!

Then we started having problems. Elbert and I both had to quit our jobs to care for the young people who came to our house night and day. Plus, some young people needed to live with us for various reasons. They either came from bad home environments or they just didn't have any other place to go. Soon we needed a bigger house and a way to support ourselves by working together with the young people who stayed with us. Miraculously, both of those needs were taken care of. At a very small cost we were able to get a big old house in need of much repair, which we were able to do ourselves by working together. We also rented a small building on the main street of town, which, with a couple of months of hard work and renovation, we turned into a beautiful little sandwich shop. We painted the building bright yellow and called it "The Yellow Deli." There we served the best sandwiches in town at a reasonable price. But our specialty there was something which couldn't be purchased with money. Printed right on our menu was, "Our specialty is the fruit of the Spirit. Why not ask?" For this was really our motivation in opening a restaurant — that we could come into contact with the people and be able to show them through our lives more so words how wonderful it was to know God. For as it says in Gal 5:22, the fruit which will come forth from one who has been given the Holy Spirit in salvation is this: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

gentleness. This is something which people, especially in that area of the south, failed to realize. They knew all about getting saved, being that it is the Bible Belt. We didn't want to preach to them because they had heard enough preaching. Words are cheap. We wanted to show by our actions what it was really like to know salvation — that love, joy, peace, etc., should speak for itself.

The restaurant was an immediate success. When we started making money, we never sat down and decided how we would divide up the profits so that each one would get his just portion of the proceeds. No, the Spirit we had received had set us free from the craving for selfish material gain. He had made us one family, supernaturally. This wasn't just a doctrine of the brotherhood of all believers. No, it was reality. And honestly, that thought of dividing up our money never entered our minds. We didn't go into business to make lots of money. Of course, we needed to support ourselves. We knew that it wasn't right to even ask for donations to support *a worthy cause*. The south is full of preachers begging for contributions for every conceivable cause, but the Spirit and the Bible say, "work with your own hands" to support yourselves. And we really wanted to work because our work (our restaurant) wasn't just an empty job. It was a witness of something very special which is rarely seen today.

People just loved to come in and talk and sit for hours in our restaurant. It was a peaceful place — different, not full of the usual tense atmosphere of a typical sandwich shop. And every one was happy. The local papers did big full-color stories about us, giving glowing reports of our work. Our restaurant was always full, and we were very popular.

Soon we began to grow in numbers. So we got another house to provide a place for more people who wanted to stay and work with us homeless people, lonely people, misfits (like wise ourselves) who were looking for a real life. Then we started another restaurant in a nearby town and got another house to house the people who worked in that town. Soon we had seven little restaurants in surrounding towns and quite a few

houses. This was within four or five years time. We still handled all of our assets as we did at the first — as one family (a very happy family). All of our restaurants were successful, and we were still very popular.

We were still attending denominational churches on Sundays. But then the problems started. Some people in the congregations would complain about the “riff-raff” we would bring in to their ‘nice church’. And even black people came with us! Though the pastor would try to calm his troubled flock by extolling the ‘great work we were doing among the young people, bringing souls to Jesus’ — the bigoted nature of these pseudo religious Christians could not be covered.

And from our side too there was trouble. It was very hard for us to find fancy enough clothes for everyone who stayed with us to make our Sunday trek to church. Also it was very hard to explain to these young disciples the obvious contradictions they saw in the lives of these rich, bigoted Christians that they saw in church every Sunday, when the gospel which we had proclaimed to then was one which demanded selfless love for your neighbor.

Then one day when all these things were troubling us the situation came to a head. The church which we were attending put off their evening service because the ‘Super-bowl’ was going to be on TV and none of their members would dare miss that just to come worship their Creator. For us that really exposed where they were coming from. Though the words they proclaimed from their podiums seemed good, the lifestyle which that system propagated just couldn’t be justified.

We decided that from then on we would just go to a nearby park on Sunday mornings and sing and worship our God. We saw that in the Bible it doesn’t say that there needs to be a preacher up in front and everyone else must sit on pews and listen. Quite the contrary. It says in 1 Corinthians 14 that whoever has something to say when we assemble together to worship should say it, and whoever has something to pray about it. We just wanted to be simple believers who simply obeyed the truth.

And that choice was the beginning of us really finding our true identity as the people of God. When we stopped “going to church” and started being the church (as the scriptures teach us to be) something wonderful was begun. But this choice was also what informed the religious system. Somehow our choice to withdraw from them made a statement without a word really having to be spoken. Our withdrawal from that system exposed something within the foundation of the system. It was that very thing which made it impossible for us to co-exist with them there. For within that system, as strange as this may seem being an institution which is called by the name of Christ, one can never live a life in obedience to the words of Jesus. It is impossible.

At that time, we had no idea what our stand for the truth would bring upon us. For from that time on we began to see opponents rise up against us from the ranks of the ‘religious’. All of a sudden we weren’t POPULAR any more. We didn’t really understand all that was going on at that point, and we really tried to make peace, but we found our efforts futile. Lies and slanderous rumors began to surface about us. The newspapers were eager to pick up on an “evil report.” And I think you know most of the story from there on.

But during all this time a core of people were forming within our ranks of very sincere, whole-hearted disciples. It was no longer “just a group of kids who loved Jesus” (as you quoted David saying in your article). For what we were doing wasn’t POPULAR any longer so those who stayed with us must be motivated by a true conviction in their heart.

The scripture you quoted in your article in Acts 2 and 4 came alive too us in those ways. We realized that this was just exactly what was happening in our midst. We did not see this scripture first and then set out to form a group of people just like those described in the first church. But we saw the scripture later, after the Holy Spirit had already begun to do that same thing in our midst as He did with those very first believers. We began to see just a little bit of God’s eternal purpose for mankind. We saw

that He had always wanted A PEOPLE that He could express His Life among, a people who would demonstrate His Character to the world around. He wanted the world to know what He was really like. He desired Israel to be those people, but they were continually unfaithful.

In talking with the brothers in Island Pond I learned that you are a Jew. I guess you could understand quite well then what we mean about being “spiritual Israel”(as you said in the article). This has been a growing revelation to us over the past several years. Since our beginnings we always had a special love for the Jews. Elbert has felt this way about the Jews since his childhood when he first began to hear about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He says that they were “a people” with a real heritage.

Yet, we always wondered about what the Apostle Paul meant in Romans chapter 11 about “provoking the Jews to jealousy that they might be saved.” Paul was a Jew and he really wanted his people to be saved (so much so that he even said that he wished that he could be accursed that they might be saved; Rom 9:3-4). But he saw that the abundant grace that came from THEIR GOD, YHWH, upon ‘a people’ outside of physical Israel, they would become jealous that their God had turned away from them to another people. For the Jews knew the promises of the God of their father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they were always unfaithful to Him. They spurned His word down through the centuries which came to them through the prophets and Moses. Until they committed the ultimate breach in crucifying the very Messiah sent to them from YHWH. Yet still they thought the promises would remain with them in their obstinate rebellion.

But YHWH did not go back on His promise to Abraham. He merely transferred them to a people who would produce the good fruit of obedience (as you mentioned in the article about “knowing them by their fruit”), because those people have the same FAITH as Abraham did. Yahshua said that the kingdom would be taken away from ‘the unfaithful people’ and given to a people who would produce the fruit of it. Romans Chapter 9 speaks all about this.

Yet this was quite difficult to understand for there was surely nothing at all to see in Christianity to make any good Jew one bit jealous today. But if YHWH's people are truly living the way His Son YAHSUA commanded them to there will be much fruit, good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. We truly desire to live a life with YAHSUA as our King — making us His kingdom (living under His dominion) — that we may bear the good fruit of the kingdom. In His church now we see a little of what it will be like in the Messianic Age to come when He will reign in righteousness as the King of the whole earth. No longer will hatred and injustice reign upon this earth, for Satan's dominion will have come to an end. But we must live now in the church (YHWH's community) as a foretaste of what that Messianic Kingdom will be like then. This is the Messianic hope.

During the glorious Messianic Age we will see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Physical Israel will be restored because she will have repented of her faithlessness. She will repent because she has finally been provoked to jealousy by 'a people' who live in obedience to YHWH and experience the abundant blessing of that obedience.

Susan, we really want to be those people who have the faith of Abraham and live in obedience to the commands of YHWH. I guess that is why we are having such a hard time getting along with this world's system. As you can see by how we began, we in no way started out to cause trouble or antagonize anyone. But some how this happens!

The lies and accusations which have been printed and televised about us across the U.S. have been unbelievable to me. How have we caused such a stir?

When we decided to leave the South due to the great amount of opposition we were getting from the religious people there (and by the media who were roaming around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour), we hoped that in New England that the more liberal thinkers would not respond so unreasonably as did those ultra-conservative Southerners. "A servant is not above his master. If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you..." No matter how liberal and open-minded the people may characterize themselves to be.

So now, here we find ourselves — a people who have decided not to conform to what is POPULAR. If passion for justice was popular in the 60's, well, it is still popular with us! If natural clothing and beards are out of style now, it doesn't move us. We have found the way to live our convictions, POPULAR OR NOT!

Like Bob Dylan said in one of his songs after his 'so-called' conversion: "You have to serve somebody." We have chosen who we will serve. And that song? Well, it was POPULAR. In spite of its piercingly truthful lyrics, it won a Grammie Award (or some such thing). But it was obviously the tune or perhaps the beat that caught the people's fancy. They liked it for a while, but the words never struck the hearers to the heart... And Bob Dylan? What's he singing about NOW? Was he ever really touched in his soul by anything he sang so sincerely about? If he had been he would have changed his tune....

Susan, I just wanted to let you know a little bit about us: Elbert and me. We are real people just like all the others you met during your stay in Island Pond. We live a real life along with the brothers and sisters in Island Pond, Nova Scotia, and here in France. We have been staying with the community here in Sus, France for several months now. As you said in your article we did have to come up with the money to buy the big old chateau in which the community lives. The owners, who are very friendly toward us, came into a financial crisis several months ago and were forced to sell it by a certain date. They really wanted us to buy it, and made the price as reasonable as they could. But still it was well beyond our means to buy this big place, as we are just beginning over here and have very little income as of yet from our businesses. But our Heavenly Father was faithful, and He has helped us in our time of great need. (Perhaps I could explain how He did it some other time for this letter in already so very long.)

The community here has had to contend with the many governmental regulations which go along with the more socialistic form of government they have here in France. It is much easier in 'the land of free enterprise' (though we have our problems there also).

But a door has been opened to us here to begin a small business of making hand looms. Also we have several weavers, so we are also making hand-woven fabrics, wall hangings, and rugs. We are opening up a small shop in a nearby village where we will be weaving and selling our things. We also have a bakery, which is not a very profitable business in France because everyone here is addicted to that bread which in the U.S. is called “French Bread.” We only make whole wheat bread (in many different, delicious varieties). But we aren’t giving up with our bakery. Our business is slowly increasing. And anyway, the French people need to learn what REAL bread is all about....

So anyway that is the way we support ourselves over here. Our life in the community here is much the same as the life you saw in Island Pond, only on a smaller scale. I wonder if you have been back to Island Pond since you wrote your story? I hope your interest in us wasn’t just journalistic. It didn’t seem as if it was. And as you said in your article, you didn’t see all there is to see during your visit. We would also like very much to meet you and I as sure you would really enjoy it here.

Oh, there is one thing that we have been wanting to ask you. It is about your comment in the article about all the men being very caring and respectful “with a few notable exceptions.” We were wondering what these exceptions were? We wondered if the rudeness you encountered may have been due to the fact that you are a reporter, and we have had hard times with reporters before. Surely you can see why some of us might be a bit awkward in coming in contact with one. Sometimes it isn’t easy to persevere as we should in loving kindness, when we have had so many bad experiences in the past. Surely this is no excuse for being unkind, and we hope that these “notable exceptions” could somehow be resolved with you so as not to make a lasting bad impression upon you. We really felt bad to think that you may have been mistreated in some way during your visit.

Susan, we really want you to know that you are welcome to come here to Sus for a visit with us. It seemed from the way that you wrote your article, that you have a heart

that has not yet been totally calloused by the corruption of this world. Perhaps you sense your need as I did to truly find reality in life. Perhaps you have wondered, as we did, about the purpose for which you were created.

I really don't know how you feel about things, but I am just going by a feeling we got as we read your article. I just thought that if you saw a little of what my life was like before and how our community came into being that you might somehow see the hope for even yourself to find true salvation.

If you have time and feel so inclined, I wish you would write back to me. We would really love to hear from you.

May the Messiah of Israel reveal himself to you. For it is in the name of YAHSHUA the Messiah that I write to you today....

Thank you for giving such a FAIR account of our life...

Marsha Spriggs