

My Friend Luis

Episode 8 — “In the Shadows”

A podcast by Wayne Jacobsen · myfriendluis.com · April 2021

WAYNE: And we had a long talk about, what do we do with this? What do we — do we keep you guys on? Do we let you go, because now we know that it's illegal? Well, what we were going through is — but you're our friends. These are two people we care about, and you've got two girls that you're raising that we care about and that we love.

Hi, I'm Wayne Jacobsen, and this is My Friend Luis — the story of one of the most engaging men I've ever met, and of the friendship that developed between us. It has transformed both of our lives and left us in grateful awe at the adventure of life on this little planet.

In our last episode, Luis discovered that the green card he'd paid a lawyer \$23,000 to procure for him was counterfeit. Knowing I had asked him about it when I first hired him, he wanted me to know. I still picture him standing in my study, letting me know that he needed to tell me something. He sighed deeply, and the air was thick with his pain. "I think my green card is counterfeit," he said. And then he told me the story of his attempts to renew it, and that his lawyer had been arrested. My heart sank. This can't be true. How could any lawyer exploit his own people like that? That's all I could think of. But now what? Let's pick up the story from there.

And then you came and told me one day. Was that hard?

LUIS: Very.

WAYNE: Were you afraid we would let you go?

LUIS: I thought I was gonna get fired. And I was really hurt — not because I was gonna lose business, but because I was gonna lose your friendship. To me, that was much more important than anything else. And then I was really blown away by your response.

WAYNE: Before we go on, I need to paint some background for you. If this encounter had happened 20 years before, he would have gotten a very different response. To understand how Sarah and I would process this situation, we need to go back and pick up some of my story. We last left my journey nearly 20 years previous, in 1994, after my co-pastor had announced my resignation. Without the things we learned through that experience and its aftermath, we would never have been able to respond to Luis and Maria like we did.

We were pushed out of the congregation I helped start two weeks before Christmas. The next two years were incredibly painful. I'll spare you all the gory details, but I can assure you that my wife and I spent many hours in one another's arms, comforting the other over the latest rumor, missing people who had once been close friends, or watching our teenage children struggle with the new realities in our home.

Slowly, however, we began to learn those things God wanted to show us if we were willing to walk away.

On a trip to Australia, six months into the stretch of our journey, we heard a different story of Jesus dying on the cross that we'd never heard before. In the story I knew, God was the angry deity out to avenge the sins of humanity who had defiled his creation. Jesus jumped between us and his Father to help take our punishment, so God wouldn't have to be angry with us anymore. That story left me deeply endeared to Jesus, but it never allowed me to trust in the Father's love for me. How could it, if he could only satisfy his justice through vengeance?

The story we heard in Australia was not primarily about punishment. It was about God finding a cure for the sin and shame that had taken humanity captive and made us flee from God in fear. Jesus didn't come to save us from an angry God, but to rescue us from the crushing power of sin and the delusion of our own darkness. The relationship wasn't broken from his side. It was broken from ours. He died to save us from ourselves, and to open the door for us to receive the love that his Father always had for us. The cross was not designed to punish our sin, but to heal us of it.

I had a hard time believing that story when I first heard it, because I was 42 years old and had been around Christianity my entire life. Surely if this were true, I would have heard it by now. But I came back from Australia in a desperate search to find out which is the more accurate story. Using all my biblical skills, talking with my theologically minded friends, and praying for Jesus to show me, I finally came to realize this new story was the one Scripture told. I was already loved, not just by Jesus, but by his Father. They had orchestrated this plan together so that all of us could have guilt-free access to him, and by living in his love be transformed — to be free to live as Jesus lived in the world. It began to change me in ways I never imagined. And I began to see people in pain with a new compassion and a desire to help, rather than judging them so I could feel better about my own failures.

At the end of that study, now a year after my betrayal, in an orchard near my home on an early morning walk, I came face to face with the love of a Father I had only tasted of in snippets over the decades before. When Luis tells his story of finding that note by a fire outside Tijuana, I know exactly what he means. The love I touched that morning was so rich and palpable, I knew that if I never preached another sermon, counseled another life, or wrote another book, my Father would not love me one bit less than he had always loved me.

Over the next two years, Sarah and I began to discover just how loved we already were by the Father who created us. I thought his love was something good performance earned, rather than a reality I get to wake up to every morning. That discovery changed the trajectory of our lives in so many ways. Instead of trying to work hard to earn God's love, we learned to relax into the reality that we were already his beloved. I stopped doing things for God and started living with him.

The first reflection of that reality came in my concern over my ruined reputation. I realized for the previous 22 years I had lived by what other people thought of me, and worked hard to build a reputation that people would admire. When that was swept away by the lies of previously close friends, it was devastating. When God led me to trust my reputation to him, I thought he would fix it by screaming the truth from the

mountaintops. Instead, he kept letting it die, knowing that my greatest bondage was living for the approval of others. As I began to gain my footing in his love, what others thought of me became less important. In the process, I came to realize that most of what I was doing in ministry had more to do with my need for significance and affirmation by others than it ever had to do with God's work in the world. I would have said I was doing it all for him, but clearly it was more for me. And that meant I could love people differently and help them more graciously.

Second, we began to see how God was caring for us in very practical ways. When the congregation cast us aside, I was already doing a limited amount of consulting work, helping public education deal with religious liberty conflicts. But it wasn't enough to pay the bills. The two books I had previously published were out of print, and I didn't think people would want me to come speak once they found out I had been dismissed by my own congregation. Some good friends came around us in that season, hopeful I would start another congregation. I also received job offers from numerous congregations I'd spoken to around the country, when they found out I was no longer employed. To be honest, however, that was no longer in my heart. So I thought I'd better look for a real job. But whenever I did, that same voice ran through my head with different words: "You can do that if you want, but I haven't asked you to. Keep doing what you're doing, and I will take care of you."

Writing, consulting, speaking — there's not enough income in all of that. I spoke back to this thought I kept hearing in my head: "I'm not going to help you, you know. I'm not going to write any fundraising letters or press my friends to support us. You want to provide for me? You're going to have to do it without my help." My wife, of course, wasn't as quick to affirm this thought. She didn't want us to lose our home or go into bankruptcy to chase some dream of mine. So we found a way to proceed we could both embrace. We'd follow that leading as long as it worked. The first time we didn't have enough income at the end of a month to pay our bills, I would look for a job.

I expected the shoe to drop every month, but we kept getting enough money each month to pay it off. Sometimes that came through gifts, sometimes through speaking or consulting, and sometimes through odd jobs for other people. So I kept writing, helping people know God, and traveling when I had an invitation. I didn't charge anything for my services, and yet every month we had enough income from the strangest of sources to keep paying our bills.

Sometimes it was very close. The first year, Sarah told me on October 31, letting me know that we needed \$1,000 that day, or I would be looking for a job the next. I secretly hoped we'd fall short. I was tired of the stress each month of wondering if we would have enough. My Puritan work ethic upbringing found it difficult to live without a responsible means of income. It honestly would have been a great relief to find gainful employment. Later in the day, she returned with our mail and brought in an envelope. "You're not going to believe this," she said. "\$1,000?" I responded through squinted eyes. "Yes, in one check," she said. "But you're not going to like who it came from." She handed me the envelope. She was right — I didn't. It was someone I didn't respect, and didn't want to take their money. There was a letter inside: "We heard you were starting a new ministry and wanted to share in it with you." "We can't keep this," I handed the note back to Sarah. "But we are," she said. "And whatever issues you have with him, you can work it

out with God." And with that, she walked out of my study.

It has now been 25 years that we've watched God care for us in a variety of ways, not just financial. Hard times still come. We've been lied about again and betrayed by close friends. We've had our backs to the wall with needs bigger than our resources. But now we know we're never alone in them.

Two years later, I was beginning to live outside the religious obligations of my childhood and growing to know God as a real presence in the universe. I was better able to sense his leading, because I was no longer trying to build a ministry for him or worried about what others would think. I found myself meeting lots of other people who were living that way as well, and was so encouraged by the restfulness, humility, and the generosity I saw in them — and blessed to see those things taking shape in me as well. So when we learned that Luis's green card was a counterfeit, we had some difficult choices to make. But we also had a different way to think about it than we'd ever had before.

LUIS: You looked at me with mercy and with compassion and love. You're not just — you were understanding about it. You didn't fire me. But you went a step beyond, saying, "I wanna help you out, get your green card. I want to help you. But this time we're gonna go through my lawyers." And you find one of the best lawyers. And I mean, I will ever be grateful for you.

WAYNE: Well, there was a period of time, too, after you first told us. And then you guys — after you left that day, Sarah and I sat down, and over the next week we had talked about, can we do this? This is what we always said we'd never do, is hire somebody, because one, it's illegal, and two, it's exploitive. I feel like, because we allow illegal immigration in the US and no one solves it — Republicans and Democrats, neither one solve it — so we continue to get cheap labor that we exploit in America. And then I feel like I'm exploiting you. So I feel bad from both standpoints. And we had a long talk about, what do we do with this? What do we — do we keep you guys on? Do we let you go? Because now we know that that's illegal. Well, what we were going through is — but you're our friends. These are two people we care about, and you've got two girls that you're raising that we care about and that we love. 'Cause you guys have come to dinner at our house — yeah, you just haven't worked here. You've had dinner, we've had — we've hung out. We just — we enjoy — I genuinely enjoy being with you and exploring your journey. Maria doesn't communicate as easily in English, so that's not always — your girls, I really enjoy your girls. They seem to enjoy Sarah and I, and our dogs. They love our dogs to death.

LUIS: Oh yes.

WAYNE: Yeah, it was a bit of a decision for us. We had to pray and sort it out, and in the end just felt like, you know what? This is a couple that's here. You've been here a long time. You've got nothing to go back to Mexico for. You just don't have a way of life there. And so out of love and mercy, we're going to not only continue to have you work with us, we are also going to get an attorney — an immigration attorney — and see if we can do anything to help you be legal here.

Shortly after that encounter, Luis and I drove to downtown LA to meet with one of the top immigration attorneys in the country. I warned Luis about making this trip. As long as he wasn't sure his green card was

counterfeit, he could continue to use it. I knew once he found out for sure, he would no longer be able to do so. He wanted to know the truth, however, and if it wasn't legitimate, we both wanted to know what else we could do. It only took a few moments for us to confirm the green card Luis had been given was fake. We talked about other options as to how to make Luis and Maria legal here. Sarah and I offered to sponsor them in some way, or pay a fine. In short, there was nothing we could do. According to the attorney, their best hope for legal status would come when their eldest daughter turned 21. Since she is a US citizen, because she was born here, she could sponsor them into the country. That, however, was still a few years into the future. In the short term, they would have to live in the shadows again. And that has not been without its challenges.

Did you tell all your other clients about the green card no longer valid? Or didn't most of them not know about your green card, or what?

LUIS: No, just you. You're the only one. And don't get me wrong, we have a great relationship with everybody, and I don't consider them as clients — they're friends. My daughters keep joking about it. They go like, oh, whoever he encounters — anybody — he makes friends with them.

WAYNE: Yeah, you do.

LUIS: That's true. You're the only one I told about it.

WAYNE: But when you were working for us, you were also working for a church school in town. Is that right?

LUIS: Yes.

WAYNE: That was your biggest client — had to be, by income, right?

LUIS: Oh, yes, it was, yes.

WAYNE: At some point they came to find out that you didn't have a green card.

LUIS: Yes, they did.

WAYNE: You told them — if I remember right, you told them you didn't have it?

LUIS: I told them about it, yes. I guess I consider them as an account, but it's different, because with them, my relationship with them — even though you will think that, you know, the pastor of the church, you know, you have to have a really close relationship because he's a pastor — it's not what you think. A lot of people, they used to talk to me and they said, "Sometimes must be a privilege to work in a church and school," you know, kind of like holy grounds, you know, look at it from a religious perspective. All I used to tell them is like, "Look, you know him as the pastor — you go there once a week. I know him, not even as a leader. I know him as a boss. He's no fun to work with." In my case, he never really tried to talk to me. Like, on the last times we were talking, I was trying to approach him because I couldn't hear him. So he backs off and goes like defensive, with his hands in front of him, and go like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa

— you're too close to me. You're too close to me." Kind of like thinking that I was to kind of hurt him or something.

WAYNE: And this wasn't because of the pandemic?

LUIS: No, no, no, no — has nothing to do with the — that was way before that. And I used to put my hands behind my back so I don't seem threatening to him. This person, they really did a number, not just on me, but also in my daughters' lives.

WAYNE: 'Cause your kids were attending school there.

LUIS: That's the reason why I had to endure a lot of mistreatments — because they're there. And they got to the point where they're actually threatening me, in a sense, by saying that, "Oh, look, if you leave now, they're not gonna graduate and they're not gonna have a future. And plus your wife — she doesn't have a green card. She might get deported." And that's when I told them, and I said, "Oh, by the way, let me tell you something. I don't have it either now."

WAYNE: So how did that change with them? You worked there for a long time, right?

LUIS: Oh yeah, I was there for 14 years.

WAYNE: And some of it was really — early days was really good, or was it never really good?

LUIS: Yes. The first — I'll say three years, four years — it was okay. First pastor was amazing. He really cared about us. He kept telling us — well, he wanted us to go to church there too, so he kept saying, "I didn't see you during the service," you know? But then this new pastor — when the new pastor came in, he was like, you know, didn't really talk to you much and everything. But then everything started turning. It took a real turn for the worst. He started mistreating people, and believe me — from somebody who spent a lot of hours there, a lot of time — I saw a lot of things. I saw, not just from him — from his wife and his daughter and his son-in-law. It was like a family thing. It was a — that's why I learned the word nepotism.

WAYNE: Is it family business?

LUIS: Oh yeah, because a lot of qualified people will come in and try to get a job, and they couldn't, because they say, "Oh no, I'm gonna give it to my son," or "I'm gonna give it to my son-in-law," or "I'm gonna give this job to my daughter." It's not that they were competent at it — it's just that they needed a job, and it was a family business.

WAYNE: So when you told them you didn't have a green card, did that change some of the way they related to you?

LUIS: It did. It changed the way they treated me and my wife and my daughters. Like, they started to be more harsh towards me, start saying things — that they were not happy with the work I was performing. And I asked them, "What did I do wrong?" And at one point he says, "Well, the toilets were dirty this afternoon." I said, "This afternoon, or this morning?" I said, "Because if, when you first come in, they're

dirty, then that's on me. You come in this afternoon and you see them dirty — they've been used." He was like, "No, they shouldn't be like that."

So at first I try to submit. I try to be very humble, because I was falling into this religion path too. I was being like, oh, well, you know what — he's a pastor. I cannot say no to him, and he's a pastor. Look at the way I talked to you when we first met. I said, "Hey, I cannot charge you — you're a pastor. How could I charge you?" He started seeing that, and he started using that towards his advantage, to get more and more, to the point that they fired my wife and they kept me there. Even though I told them — I came clean and said, "Hey, look, my green card has been expired and it's not being renewed. My wife was here illegally; so was I." But they fired my wife on those grounds, but they kept me. I was working double hours for half of the money. I have to do my wife's work and mine, and there's only one pay — mine. Meanwhile, my daughters are being mistreated. I said, you know what, I don't know what to do. We have like two more years to go. I don't know how am I gonna endure this?

Pastor even mentioned once, he says, "It'll be really bad if immigration finds out that your wife doesn't have a green card." When he said that, I looked at him and I said, "Are you threatening me?" I got very upset that day. That's the day he says, "Don't get closer to me, don't get closer to me." One day I said, "Pastor, did you need me?" He said, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I wanted to tell you that we're not happy with you, and you have to put in more hours." And because it's really hard for someone to find a job undocumented — and it's illegal if you go out there and try to find a job — telling me that he wanted more, he wanted more. He wanted to take advantage.

WAYNE: So, yeah — they use the fact that you didn't have a green card now to pay you less, to work you more often, and to treat you worse, because you don't have any options. Did much else change when you knew your green card was no longer valid? I mean, in any other way?

LUIS: Yes. It changed in a way that I cannot, on good conscience, go out there and ask for a job, because I'll be lying on a legal paper. Because there's a part where you have to say that yes, you can legally work in the US, and if I put a checkmark in there, and then I sign at the bottom of the application, I'm signing that everything I put in there is true and correct — and it's not. I'll be lying. I know a lot of people do it because they have to work, but God has blessed us in a way — like with you, you guys help us a lot, and blessed us in a way that we don't have to look for a job in a company, where I can work for myself. Don't get me wrong — we still do taxes. I pay my taxes, I obey the laws, I do everything I supposed to do.

WAYNE: But you've had either job offers or places you could have worked if you could have checked that box, right?

LUIS: A lot of offers.

WAYNE: Yeah. And you would like to have more of a corporate job sometimes, maybe with health benefits and some of those things — or not?

LUIS: Of course, yes.

WAYNE: And so you guys keep cleaning houses and dealing with varmints, because you're Sarah's go-to guy when she's got raccoons and squirrels and snakes out here.

LUIS: Yeah.

WAYNE: Man, you handle all that stuff — you don't even care, man. You walk up to a 10-foot rattlesnake and just do it.

LUIS: No, I grew up doing that stuff.

WAYNE: So Luis and Maria continue to work their cleaning business and raise their daughters, making the most of the circumstances they faced. In spite of their own needs, Luis has a generous heart for others. I've watched him buy meals for homeless people, give someone a ride across Los Angeles, and always help anyone in need. Even in a simple trip to the market, that generosity could turn the mundane into an adventure and put his own exposure at risk with law enforcement.

LUIS: My wife and I were shopping at Fresh & Easy. As I was waiting for my wife — she was inside, shopping — I saw this gentleman. He went in, and he just moved his shopping cart, put it to the side, close to where I was parked. And he just took off. At the moment, I didn't pay any attention to it. But when my wife came in with the groceries, I went outside to help her put them inside the truck. And when I got out and I pushed the cart in, I noticed that there was a wallet there on the cart. And when I grabbed it and opened it, I noticed that there was a badge inside. And there were credentials there, and business cards. When I opened it, I was actually really shocked to see that it was a badge from an FBI agent. I was really shocked. At that moment, I was like, what do I do with this thing? I felt like that thing was radioactive. If I touch it, what do I do? Should I take it into the store?

So I looked, and then I noticed that there was a business card there. So I called, and he didn't answer his cell phone. So I called the office — the field office. Somebody picked up the phone, and then it was kind of hard for me to explain the nature of my call, because it was kind of weird for me. Hey, I didn't want to turn this guy in or make him look bad — that, hey, this guy lost his wallet, or his badge. So I explained who I was and the nature of my call to the secretary. Before I keep talking, she says — oh, so she deducted right away — she said, "So do you have the wallet?" I said, "I do." She says, "Okay, hold on one second. I'm gonna try to patch it through." She put me on hold, and I was on hold for like 10 minutes. It was a long time, and I was still there. I didn't want to move. After 10 minutes, I got a different voice on the other side — it was a male. And he says, "Hi, this is" — such-and-such, he gave me his number — his name, I'm sorry. And he said, "I am a special agent, and that's my wallet." He started asking me questions as to where I found it, and said — oh, I told him where I found it. And he says, "I was just there not too long ago. I'm on my way back."

So I waited there. He said he'll be back like maybe 10, 15 minutes. I waited there 10, 15 minutes — nothing happened. Then I waited 25, half an hour — nothing happened. And I was getting concerned, especially by having possession of these credentials on my hand. I called back, and the same secretary picked up the phone, and she says, "I don't know what's going on. Let me call him." She couldn't get

through to him. It took her about another 30 minutes to find out what was going on. And what happened was that on the way back, he was speeding. When I saw the car, it didn't look like an official car — looked like a regular car. Police officer pulled him over, and then the police was behind him. It was a huge deal. He was trying to explain himself as to why he was rushing, but he didn't really want to tell him that he forgot his wallet back there with these credentials, because that would make him look really bad. They wouldn't believe him that he was an FBI agent, and they were holding him.

Finally, the secretary called me, and she told me what was going on. And I said, "Where is he? Where are they keeping him?" She says, "Right on the exit," and she gave me the name of the exit. And I said, "Oh, you know what? That's just right up the street." I said, "I can ride the freeway south, and then get out and come back, and get out on that exit." She said, "Can you do that, please? Would you do that?" I said, "Yes, I can." And then she guided me as to how to approach that situation. She says, "Look, they're gonna ask you a lot of questions. They may ask you to go to the ground. Do as they say. I'm sorry" — she was apologizing ahead. She said, "You're gonna have to go through all of that. Is that okay?" I said, "Yeah, that's fine."

WAYNE: Were you concerned, being an undocumented alien here, that you would somehow get exposed by getting involved in this thing? Did you ever just wanna drop it and run off?

LUIS: I do — I did. And my wife, she was at one point, she was saying, "This is getting out of control." And I was thinking the same way. I said, this is getting way too big. I thought it was gonna be like, you know, "Here's your wallet, God bless you, be careful next time." That's it, right? Oh, no, no, no — it grew way out of proportion. As I was driving and getting closer, my poor wife, she was getting very, very scared. And I said, "You stay on the car. You don't get out — you stay there, okay? Just keep your hands on the door handle." She just grabbed the door handle with both hands, like that, and stay like that so they can see your hands.

So I got out of the car with the wallet out, up on the air, and my two hands up. And then I started calling for the first officer. I had the secretary still on the phone, on speaker, so she can talk to them. And then I said, "Listen, this man, he is who he says he is. He is an FBI agent." And then when I said, "And I have his wallet" — oh man. They said, "Who are you?" And then I told him my name. And then I said, "If you allow me, I can reach for my wallet, so I can pull my driver's license, so I can identify myself." They said, "No, no, no, no, no. Get on the ground." And then I have the secretary on the phone. She says, "Do as they say. Put the phone on the ground there. But just don't turn it off. Let — I wanna hear everything. I'm recording everything," she says, "for your protection." So I said, okay. So I put the phone down. I put the gentleman's wallet down. I got on the ground, put my hands behind my back, and I waited for them. They came in, they put me on handcuffs, and I stayed there. They pull out my wallet, they look, but I was still on handcuffs on the floor. They went back while two officers were watching me. Somebody was checking my record. He came back. He just says, "Pick him up." They picked me up. They sat me by the side of the road.

When I was there on handcuffs, in the back of my mind I was like, I wish nobody who knows me drives by right now. They're gonna think I'm a criminal. And everybody driving by — it was by the freeway; everybody could see you. People keep looking at you, and I was like, oh man, this is really embarrassing.

WAYNE: And was Maria watching this? Did she see it from where she was? Was she watching you?

LUIS: She — no, no. Well, there were patrols blocking her. I never asked her, actually, about it. She just asked me at the end. She says, "What was all that about?" I said, "Oh, just procedure." I said, "Just protocol."

WAYNE: And where was the agent at the time, when you were walking? Was he on the ground too?

LUIS: No, he was —

WAYNE: The FBI agent.

LUIS: He was inside of a car.

WAYNE: Was he handcuffed as well?

LUIS: Yes, he was. What made actually this situation even bigger, it's because he had a class three weapon. It's a class that only government officials, like soldiers, can carry. It's a full auto guns. It was a military AR-15, and with the capability of being full automatic. And that makes things really, really big, because he can't identify himself. They don't know if he's allowed to carry those weapons. And he had bulletproof vest on the back, he had a surveillance equipment, and they thought it was a huge deal.

After I identified myself, so they screened me, then they let me talk and say what happened. I have to tell them the truth. There's no other way about it. I was trying to protect them, but I said, well, I can't. It is what it is. So I said, "He left his wallet out there in the cart when he was shopping at Fresh & Easy. And that's why he was rushing, trying to get his badge back." When I said that, both of the officers say, "Who does that?" Both of them — they look at each other, and they said, "Who does that?" And then one of them says — he said, "Don't say anything, because we might do it someday." And they kind of like start laughing.

So they walk back. They start talking to the guy, and they start asking him questions and say, "Who's your superior?" — all that stuff. I was close; I could hear it. After that, they un-handcuffed him. Then they made more phone calls. And then he would say, "Who should we call?" So he says, "Oh, call this person, okay?" And just to verify. And then they say, "Yeah, okay, but don't tell him why you're calling." He didn't want him to say that he lost his wallet, I guess. After he identified himself, then everybody left. And then he says, "Follow me — here, there's a Home Depot near. Follow me by the parking lot, so we can talk some more. We cannot talk here by the side of the freeway." When we got there, he thanked me, and he gave me his business card. And then he says, "Hold on one second." He went back to the trunk, and he pulled out this T-shirt. And he gave me a T-shirt on that day — I remember, I still have it. He said, "Here, this is for you." It's not even my size, but yeah, that's okay. I took it. I said, "Oh, thank you. You don't have to do that, but thank you." I took it — I like the shirts. Like I said, he gave me his business card. He said, "Oh, if

you ever need anything from the federal government, just call me and let me know." I said, "Well, hopefully I never would. But if I do, well, I'll call you."

WAYNE: You didn't think about asking him for a green card?

LUIS: Well, I did, I did, but it was way too much to ask from him. But I had an issue in 2004 and 2006 — an issue of somebody stealing my identity, and IRS charging me extra money for something I didn't do. They said I failed to declare certain money I earned and bought a house in the city of Chino, and I didn't do that. It wasn't me. Somebody was stealing my identity. I called him, and I talked to him, and I said, "Listen, I'm sorry to bother you." He actually picked up right away, and he knew who I was too. And he says, "Hey, buddy, how are you?" I said, "Good, good, good. Listen — remember when you asked me, if I ever had an issue —" He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." He says, "What's up?" I said, "Well, listen, this is going on, right?" He said, "Okay." He asked me for my information. I trust him, so I gave it to him.

15 minutes later he called, and he says, "It's done." I said, "What's done?" He says, "The IRS problem — it's done." I said, "Really?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "I believe you. I checked it." He says, "It is obvious that you couldn't be working at three different places. You couldn't be in Kansas and working here at the same time, right?" I said, "Yeah, yeah." "This is a really easy case. It's just black and white. Oh, they need to just tell them about it." And I said, "But I tried to tell them." He said, "Yeah, but they listen to me better." He says, "I got a friend there." So I said, "Are you sure? What should I do? Should I make payments or something?" He says, "Nope. You're gonna receive a letter within a month, and it's gonna tell you that." Well, I waited a month, and exactly — actually, about a month and three or four days later — the letter came in, saying that, you know, everything was taken care of.

WAYNE: Well, you've got something out of it.

LUIS: I know — it was amazing.

WAYNE: Yeah, yeah — and a T-shirt.

Surprisingly, stories like this aren't uncommon in Luis's life. His generosity for others often outweighs other considerations. One day we'll sum this up better than trying to tell you all the other stories. It was the worst day in his life since coming to the United States, but it ended in the most triumphant and unimaginable way. Next time, on My Friend Luis...

LUIS: I couldn't take it. So I went outside, and I started crying out to God. At one point I got really desperate, and I said, "Jesus, can you hear me?" And then I switched gears and started talking to him in Spanish. "Jesús, ¿me escuchas, Jesús?" — Jesus, can you hear me? Jesus. And then I started screaming outside, in my little patio. All of a sudden, the silence got broken by this deep voice that says, "¿Qué quieres?" — that means, what do you want? I was really shocked. I was blown away when I heard that. And I said it again: "Jesús, ¿eres tú?" — or, Jesus, is that you? And then the voice said, "Yes, I am Jesus" — or, "Sí, yo soy Jesús. ¿Qué quieres?" What do you want?

[Closing credits: "My Friend Luis is a production of Blue Sheep Media in association with lifestream.org. Copyright 2021 by Wayne Jacobsen. All rights reserved. Produced by Ken Joy for Ken Joy Media."]

This transcript was generated from the episode audio and lightly edited for readability: paragraph breaks and speaker labels were added, and obvious transcription errors were corrected. The speakers' own words and phrasing have been preserved.