

Bruce Ranger beats odds and wins biggest race of his Life!



Bruce Ranger, one of harness racing's all time great drivers and a member of the Christian Harness Horseman's Association, recently sat down with fellow CHHA member and author Jack Alan Levine (*Don't Blow It With God*, and *Where the Rubber Meets the Road With God*) to talk about life, God, and his personal struggles with alcohol, depression and fear.

Bruce knows all about winning on the Harness track, with over 8,000 career wins and a slew of driving championships. He is already a member of both the Florida and New England Harness Racing Hall of Fame. Bruce is the leading driver in the 47-year history of harness racing in South Florida. These days Bruce is still driving and training harness horses, but now he's involved in a different kind of race, as well. One with even bigger stakes! The race to save souls and change lives! Now, his main passion is to serve God by helping others who are hurting and struggling. Bruce is a champion for Jesus Christ, driving souls to the Lord and training people to walk closer with God.

While very grateful for his career in harness racing, Bruce's eyes really light up and his passion fills the air with an unquenchable enthusiasm when he speaks of the ministering work he does on behalf of God. Bruce believes that if his story can help another person who is struggling see the light, to get on the path to the winner's circle of life, to avoid the pitfalls he went through, the false starts, the trotting breaks of life that lead to despair, defeat and depression, then it will have been more than worth the effort. Bruce believes if God can save someone like him from the pit of addiction, God can save anyone. His story is a reminder to all of us, we are never to give up on anyone, but keep showing them the love of the Lord through our actions and by continuing to pray for them.

Bruce is an open book as he talks about his life and spiritual journey. Leaving no page unturned, we see with transparency and clarity Bruce's life of despair before he knew God, and now the fulfillment, peace and happiness of Bruce's life today. We know God is using Bruce as a blessing for the kingdom and we pray that multiplies tremendously, starting with you as you read his story.

Here are some memorable stories and views on life Bruce shared that day.

Jack: What would you say was your spiritual bottom?

Bruce: It was January 10, 2000; I was just at the end of the road with alcohol and substance abuse. I had a long period of time without any of that, at least 10 years, and when I got divorced I picked it up again. Of course, they say it gets worse, never better, and it certainly did. I had no answers. It was no longer about racing horses or "What are people going to think?" I was dying and I knew it. There was not a question in my mind. When it would be... how soon... a week... two weeks... three weeks... I don't know, but I knew I was going to die. It was either get myself into a 12-step program or wait for something to happen. As soon as the bottom fell out, I found myself walking into a treatment center in North Carolina. That was it.

Jack: You were married for ten years and sober during that whole time, then you relapsed. That must have ripped you apart?

Bruce: Yes after ten years, there was no peace. I had worn my wife out. She asked for a divorce. We had never even had an argument. I guess she couldn't handle me anymore. She was just worn out. I was still not working a program in recovery. That is what got me into trouble again. I put down the substance, but I did not take care of the inner self. I shut

off the smoke alarm, but I did not put out the fire. I continued to fight depression for years and my anger issues were as bad as ever.

Jack: So, you must've known at that point that life on your terms was not working. Even though you didn't drink for ten years, which was a good thing, you still never had happiness or peace. At what point did you realize that God was the missing piece of the puzzle?

Bruce: About a year and a half after my wife packed up and left. I was drinking and partying during that time after our divorce. I ended up in a treatment center. It wasn't until then that the seed started to get planted. I had no other options. I had to be willing to do something.

Jack: When you first went into this treatment center, did you believe God was trying to save you and turn your life around?

Bruce: No, I didn't believe in anything when I went there. I had no concept of God. God had spoken to me many, many times over the years and I just never heard it. I just missed it. It just wasn't even in the equation. There were a lot of good people in my life over the years. I can look back now and see it. I couldn't see it then, nor did I want to hear it. The treatment center was just the start. That was a safe haven for the 28 days. They kept me out of harm's way. I don't know how much I grasped there, but I did follow their program. I didn't know how it was going to help me, but I didn't know what else to do.

Jack: You talked about Daryl Bier coming to tell you about God after you got out of the treatment center. When he found God did you notice the difference in his life?

Bruce: Before he found God, Daryl was about like me until he finally turned the corner. It was live or die, life or death. Pick one. He was at bottom. Then he accepted Jesus and you could see the change in his life immediately. He changed big time. He had peace and confidence and plenty of God's love to share! I remember when he first came back around and said he had found God, and my mind just slammed shut when I heard that. I was so closed-minded to that aspect of it at that time, but Daryl spoke to me and shared the Lord with me anyway!

Jack: Is your attitude now, 'Lord I can see your hand in everything that has happened to me in my life; in everything I suffered with and struggled through. I see now you are using it for good, to help others, and I am happy with You, God, and happy with myself?'

Bruce: I am. It took probably two or three years in recovery. Before I wasn't sure, with the 12-step program I baulked on each step, but I would pray because that was what they suggested I do. My brain was still pretty scrambled and I couldn't make heads or tails out of the recovery Big Book or the Bible, so I didn't do a lot of reading at the time, but I would say thank you at night and every morning I would pray, "God, please help me get clean and sober again." After about eight months of really, really struggling not to have a beer, or drink or use drugs daily, God showed up in a big way. There was a guy I disliked most in my 12-step program; I really could not stand him even though he had never done anything to me. Well one day, at a noontime meeting, I must have had this desperate look on my face, he asked me, "Are you all right?" In hindsight I can say it was my first experience with true humility. I knew God had humbled me and I said, "No, I need help." That same man worked with me from that day on, through the 12 steps of recovery. The obsession to drink left me, just like the recovery counselors and the recovery program Big Book said it would.

Jack: Was that the point that you realized that God is Jesus, and it was Jesus who healed you?

Bruce: It was in March 2001, about 14 months after I sat down with the guy I did not like, and I shared my whole life story. That was step five of the 12-step program. The obsession to use and drink had vanished and I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that was what they were talking about. Something was just different. God had delivered me!

Jack: Now, people look at you and say, "Bruce has something I want. He's got peace in his life." Not perfection. None of us will be perfect until we are in heaven with God. But God is using you in a big way to reach people in need with comfort and the Good News of Jesus Christ. With the comfort God gave you, you are now able to give to others. How does that make you feel? Are you good with that?

Bruce: I have had some ups and downs along the way. I have sought a lot of outside help. I had been back to the treatment center a couple of times to follow up, without picking up a drink, and somewhere along the way, I think about two or three years into my sobriety, I felt led by God to start carrying the message to others who were suffering and doing for them what some wonderful people did for me. It went from a chore to a passion, and that is what God did for me. He

gave me a passion, a joy, a mission, a purpose in life of far more importance and satisfaction than all my racing trophies. On a Sunday, when I have free time, there is nothing I would rather do. I would rather do it than race. I would rather do it than go to the gym. I would rather do it than go on vacation. I do it when I am on vacation. It's not work; it's my joy. It is my privilege and honor to be used by God in a positive way to help others. I am so happy that I am finally able to do something in life that really matters for people and for the kingdom of God.

Jack: God has given you purpose. What a blessing. You said in the past, 'God was probably trying to reach me, and I just wasn't listening.' Do you really believe that?

Bruce: Yes, definitely. Early on, when I was a child, I had a lot of relatives in my neighborhood who would take me to Sunday School and I just remember I was touched upon by God a few times during the years, but I couldn't put it together. The Father, The Son, and the Holy Ghost. I just didn't get it. It wouldn't register. As soon as I could talk them into not going to Sunday school, I did. For a long time after that the only time that I visited a church was for a wedding or a funeral.

I can look back at the people in my life over the years and I had some good role models, but I made some very bad choices. I looked up to people that were doing all the wrong things, even before harness racing. I gravitated to the thugs in school. Not the guys who were studying and doing sports or extracurricular activities. I always gravitated the wrong way. When I should've gone left, I went right. When I should have gone right, I went left.

Looking back at my thinking, even before I picked up a drink, I was thinking with an alcoholic mind. My father asked me a question one time. "You know what's wrong with you?" He said, "You have all the right answers. They're just to the wrong questions." He was a great role model. I just didn't follow him. I had an uncle that was into horse racing. He was also a great role model. His youngest brother actually got me into horse racing, and he was a Godly man and a positive spiritual inspiration for me. He may have been a little over the top for Jesus, but he was a great role model for me. I wouldn't hear anything about God at that time. There was another guy who raced horses out of Yarmouth, Maine. He wasn't spending his last dollar on alcohol and he wasn't gambling. He was raising his kids the right way, getting them an education. He was another great role model. But as usual I chose to take after the guys that were doing the wrong things.

Jack: Looking back at that time in your life, did you feel your behavior and alcohol addiction was something that you said, 'I am stuck in and can't get out of' or 'this is okay; I am just fine with this'?

Bruce: You know, at the time, it was just fine. I worked on the farm when I was a kid. There was always a little partying going on with our cousins and stuff. It was not horrible, but it wasn't right. But I was okay with it at that time. When I got my first car, I was pretty much a daily drinker. I would always be out with the few of us that were up to no good. I look back now at what it robbed from me. It took any type of family life away. I failed at being a brother. I really failed at being a son. I failed at being a father. As far as an education, I wasn't a great student. I could pass the classes but my grades plummeted and I didn't care. I gravitated to my uncle's horse farm after school. I couldn't wait to get there. The old-time caretakers would get me a little beer or a little wine and show me how and where to hide it, and I did not have to be at home. I did not have to be at school. I could just be with the horses. It turned out to be a great education for how I make my living, but damaged me in many other ways.

Jack: Tell me about your daughter? How old were you when she was born?

Bruce: I think I was 17 and she was 16. I did not marry the lady who had my daughter. I had just gotten out of school; my daughter was born June 20, 1977. I went to the hospital and saw this beautiful little baby girl. So my girlfriend and I set up house. It basically amounted to two kids trying to raise a kid. Not a great formula. My whole life I thought that being a hard worker was enough. Be a hard worker, be a man, and pay your bills. I drank hard, I worked hard, but I had no clue about family life or about unconditional love. I've learned through recovery that being a hard worker isn't enough. I need to be honest, loyal, accountable and most importantly what I do needs to match what I say.

Jack: Would you say that relationship didn't work out because of your alcoholism?

Bruce: I think that had a lot to do with it.

Jack: What's your relationship with your daughter like today?

Bruce: She's back in my life. She is up in Maine. There was a lot going on in her life over the years. I hadn't seen her in 7 years. I was about three years sober when I got a phone call. She was getting married in Texas. She had one daughter and two boys at that time. She was marrying a guy in Houston that I didn't know. I was dating a girl in recovery at the time and

we went to the wedding. I met my three grandkids. Since then, they have added three more kids to their family... So now I have six grandkids!

Jack: Wow, you've got a whole stable full of grandkids now, haven't you?

Bruce: This is probably one of the greatest blessings I have ever had. They invited me home for Christmas recently. I was racing and I thought, you know, I really didn't want to go. I didn't want to miss anything. I didn't want to loosen my grip on anything at work, not even for a minute. I had to stay in control of my world, right? After making my many excuses my daughter said to me, "Dad, you haven't been home for Christmas in 23 years." So I trusted God. I realized He would take care of everything and I went home that Christmas. It was absolutely unbelievable; it was great! They had me dressed up in Sponge Bob pajamas and took pictures of me like that. Just to have the grandkids hanging all over me was a time of great joy and healing in my life.

Jack: Well obviously God is restoring you and using you mightily for His kingdom these days. In the Bible God said to Job, "I am going to make the second half of your life better than the first." I think God is blessing you in that same way now. God also makes an amazing promise in 2nd Corinthians 1:3-4. It says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God." Clearly God has done that in your life. He comforted and saved you, now you are doing the same for others. You could look at it and say it was wasted time in your life. Like you said, you went right when you should've gone left. Yet God loves us so much that he used that for His good. When you look now, had you not gone through all of that, He would not have been able to use you to impact the people you are impacting today. There are so many you have already helped. You may say, "But I didn't do anything." Yes you did! You spoke at 12-step meetings. You were the way into the recovery program for many people. You have personally walked many others through the program, mentoring them step-by-step so they could benefit, stay sober and grow spiritually. You have told people about God by sharing your experiences and faith. You have shared with people how God changed your life. You have planted many seeds in people so they can grow in the kingdom of God. It is inspiring to me to see God working in your life.

What was the moment in your life where it clicked and you said God, Jesus, this is it; I get it?

Bruce: The first thing I could come up with was just God. My relationship with Jesus came over time. I am not a member of any particular church. I can just go sit anywhere and listen. As I started to learn, I realized all those people couldn't be wrong. I learned not to look for the faults in people and in life. I learned not to let the ugliness of the trees ruin the beauty of the forest. I can always look at what is wrong, but what about the other hundred things that were right? That's how I was looking at the church. I wasn't looking for the good. As I started to go and to listen more, it started to come together for me. I wanted to learn it. I was willing to hear it. It has taken some time, but I read scripture every morning. I am always trying to get a better understanding of God and His will for my life. I attend a Bible study. My buddy Dan has a preacher he likes on video, so on Fridays I go and watch the preacher's message with him, then we talk about it after. Any chance I get. That's what I do.

Jack: Is there a special bible verse that really motives or inspires you?

Bruce: Well my short-term memory isn't what is used to be, unfortunately one of the consequences of my past lifestyle. It would probably be safer to say that there are not any that I don't like. I don't really understand all of it, but I can open it anywhere and read it. I can't remember all of it but I had a friend who used to say, "It is not so much that you remember it all the time, but that you are willing to read it." Just hang on to that; keep doing it. God's Spirit will teach you His Word and enable it to sink in.

Jack: I think understanding God's love for us is a critical point for every believer and that's where our peace and joy come from, when we rest in God's love, not in our accomplishments. When I look at my kids, I know how much I love them and I get a glimpse of how much God must love us because we are His kids!

Bruce: I know how much I love my daughter and my grandkids, even though we were estranged for a little while. I appreciate so much being back in the family. It means so much to me.

Jack: Yes, I understand. If my kid gave me a birthday card and "Happy Birthday, Daddy" was misspelled, I wouldn't throw the card back in his face and say, "You stupid kid. I won't accept this until you get it right." Quite the opposite. I would look at his heart and would cherish the card so much because it came from his heart! I think God looks at us like that and it's not about memorizing another verse in the Bible, it's about our hearts loving Him and being grateful for what

He has done for us (our salvation and God promising us abundant life now and eternal life forever). Our lives should reflect that attitude to others out of joy, not out of guilt or obligation.

Bruce: You're right, I know a lot of people who can repeat a chapter or verse, but they do not have God in their heart.

Jack: Is there a special place you go that really gets you focused on God?

Bruce: I think that one of the most special places on earth is that little chapel on the backstretch of Rockingham Park. We used to go there and have services on Sunday. Then, during the week, we would have a little 12-step program, and Pastor Lee would sit in on them. She said that maybe she could learn a little bit about it and she could help someone else. We did it week in and week out, every week I was there until the track closed.

Jack: Are there other distinct changes in your life as a result of your walk with God?

Bruce: One of the other blessings God has given me is that when I go home to visit my dad now, I actually go visit. I don't use it as just a flophouse anymore. I used to go there and be out running with my buddies or I'd go home to make a pit stop and do my laundry. Now I can sit there and visit my parents; we can go to a car show together. Now my Dad goes to church and I go to church with him. I am a part of that with them. I just go and I enjoy it. When I was living there before, when I was in the midst of my addiction, I was never available. I was emotionally detached.

Jack: That's a gift from God. You lived to see God restore your relationships and allow you to make amends to people you love. Now you have people that you can help, in the recovery program, at the track and everywhere you go. Now you are working with guys who are like you were earlier. They are trying to stay sober and working the 12 steps like you, and you know that it works. People stay sober if they follow the steps of that program, but as you experienced personally, it doesn't mean that they are going to have that peace and joy and contentment in life. That is something that only comes from God. Are you able to bring that concept and truth into people hearts? I understand that you cannot bring Jesus into their heart; you can only plant the seed. I have been through the recovery program, as well, so I know how it works. It is great to follow the steps, but you have to have God in your life. How has the 12-step recovery program brought you and others closer to God?

Bruce: The best I can figure is that the 12-step program is a real sugar-coated, gentle way to lead people like myself to God. I lived it. I know. For each person it is the same recipe of recovery. Yet it is a different approach with each individual to get them to the recipe. It might be a girl off the street. It might be a girl that comes from a really good family and her father drops her off and he says, "Can you help her?" I have worked with a lot of guys who, in my opinion, are hard-core, and sometimes you have to lean on them. Sometimes you got to take the other approach. Sometimes it is reverse psychology. I am getting better at that now. Little by little, slowly. You cannot force it on them. But I can plant the seed and then I will take them to a service. I will load up the truck on a Sunday morning and I have had a few of them go up front and get saved. Even if they have a slip or a fallback, they know where to go and what to do. You know, nobody can ever take that away, no matter how hard life gets. If you are breathing and you believe in God, then you have that foundation in you somewhere.

Jack: It is interesting that when people are going through a 12-step recovery program, they seem to think that when they mess up they should run away from the program, as if they are unworthy, or their failure makes them unwanted. So they drop out of the program. People who know God sometimes make that same mistake. They think, "I screwed up. I will run away from God because now he must be mad at me." I found it to be just the opposite. When you mess up, you should go to more meetings. That's when you need the program the most. And when you sin, or fall short of what you think God wants from you, that's when you need God the most. That's when you should be running back to church, back to your bible and to your prayer time with God. It's like the story of the prodigal son in the book of Luke. What is the best advice you ever got in your life?

Bruce: It was probably from my old sponsor, who has since passed away, he looked at me once when I was complaining about something and said, "You've got to change everything in your life, except the color of your eyes."

Jack: That's excellent. I have learned the same thing. I just rely on God. I say whatever you say Lord that is what I am going to do.

You are an amazing harness driver. You have done this all your life and you are around lots of people. I remember talking to Chris Hammond. He used to pitch for the Yankees, the Braves and the Marlins. He is a very strong Christian guy. He said there was a group of players doing Bible studies, yet some of the guys just couldn't wait until the Bible study was over

so they could go out and party. He just couldn't understand their hypocrisy. As a Christian, he was an outcast in the clubhouse and throughout most of baseball. Are you an outcast amongst your peers at the track?

Bruce: Yes I am, but they say God puts light in dark places. There are a few of us who are in a 12-step program who share God with others. Make no mistake about it; my lifestyle, the spiritual and recovery lifestyle, is not a popular one at the track or on the backstretch. It never has been. For the most part, from what I can see, there are young guys coming up and I see a lot of them putting money on the horses, buying fast cars or partying way too much. Are they really planning for the future? I worry about that. I have sat in on a lot of driver and business meetings around racetracks over the years and never once has there ever been prayer or talk about God. It was always about who was going to get what here or what there.

Jack: Do you have the opportunity with some of these young guys that you see coming up to go over and say, "Here's some of what I experienced, if it matters to you. I had cash, money, fame and fast cars and I saw that wasn't the way to go. I just wanted to share that with you." Or do you wait until somebody comes to you?

Bruce: It depends. Usually it's best if I let them come to me when they've hit bottom and actually want my help and input. Sometimes though track management calls me and asks me if I can help someone. I've even had security personnel call me. Other times it's a guy himself who is struggling or a friend of his. I have no problem going over and finding a seat and saying, "If you really decide you want to try something different and if you are struggling and looking for the way out I can get you to a meeting." I am good with it that way. It just comes with time and practice. Sometimes I see guys that are stuck in the same addictions that I was stuck in, and not just for years, but for decades. It is very hard to come to work and stomach that. It breaks my heart to see it but they are trapped, whether it's mental, physical or spiritual. You know they are going to hit rock bottom at some point, whether it's going to be a bad health issue, a mental breakdown, something which ends up changing their life, if they don't die first. I have seen people get locked up in jail and come right out and go right back to drugs. I've known people who have committed suicide. It makes you feel pretty helpless sometimes, but we are not God. We do what we can and carry the message of God, hope, faith and recovery as best we can, we try to be a good example, but the results belong to God and God alone.

Jack: So God is giving you the peace to know that your job is just to try to help and you're not responsible whether somebody takes it or not?

Bruce: I have gotten much better with it now. The first few years I would bring struggling people home. I'd have one on the couch, one on the floor, one on the porch. I'd be reading the recovery Big Book and the Bible to them in the morning and driving them to meetings. I'd get up and go to work. I'd come home and they would still be sitting on the porch and I could tell they hadn't done anything all day. I'd think to myself, "Are you guys for real? You got to go!"

Jack: What's the funniest thing that has ever happened to you?

Bruce: All the things I used to think were funny; they're really not that funny. It's pretty sad. Today I've come to the point where I really just don't know. Many times now, through my struggles, if it's a tough moment, maybe depression, maybe anxiety or maybe I'm just emotionally unstable. I take a deep breath, think about it and just to know that I don't really know all the answers gives me peace. I am so thankful that God does know all the answers and even more thankful that I know God! Also, I am so grateful that God has placed certain people in my life who I can call up at anytime and tell them anything I am thinking, good or bad. They are always there for me no matter what. That's a blessing. Today I can laugh at myself and I try to embrace the insanity of life. I try not to take myself so seriously. And I practice. It's not what I know, but it's what I do. It's like you were saying about reciting the Scripture; it's nice if you can recite it, but can you live it? I cannot sit here and recite perfectly the 12-step program of recovery, but I live it and I practice it daily. I know people that can recite every page of it, but they cannot get sober. They know it but they don't practice it.

Jack: As you look back on your life do you ever think, you know what God, I've had a hard life, and by the world standards I'm a successful guy, but I've suffered a lot. Do you ever wish it wasn't that way?

Bruce: There were times, but not now. I can see how it all comes together. There were times early on when I was like, "Is this all there is?" For years I used to think that all I wanted was to be a champion harness driver. When all of that came to pass in 1995 or 1996, year after year, I'd just feel emptier and emptier. It just didn't satisfy me. I just didn't get it. I'd win four, five, six races in a night. 13 all in one day. I was still empty inside. The problem all along was God was never in the equation. Today my life has turned around completely and I am all the better for it. Although I wish I could tell you I am always happy, smiling and loving, that's not true. There are times the pressures of being in the racing business get to me. There are economic pressures, day-to-day pressures of racing and caring for horses and managing employees. There are hardships and realities unique to the racing business, there's pressure to perform that never goes away. It seems the

perception is that you are only as good as your last race. There's pressure to continue to generate sufficient income to make the stable run efficiently, pressure when horses are sick or not performing as they should. All this adds to my daily stress. So sometimes people see me on the backstretch and I am not happy, sometimes I am upset about stuff related to the business and it shows on my face and in my demeanor. That's just a fact of life; there's no escaping it. For me, and others in recovery, it is always about progress, not perfection.

Jack: If someone came to you and asked for the best advice on how to live life, what would you tell them to do?

Bruce: GOD, One word. God. The only ones that believe prayer does not work are the ones that have not tried it. Like anything else you should practice it to get better at it. I can look back now and I am glad my first couple of years were such a struggle, because if I had gotten it really easy and the obsession had left instantly, I wouldn't have stayed with it. I would not have understood. I would have gone right back to doing what I was doing. For years, at the 12-step meetings, I wasn't humble enough to make their coffee, or set up chairs. I wasn't going to pick trash up after the meeting. I just wouldn't do it. I thank God that He finally humbled me. That is what I needed most to save my life!

Jack: Do you find that now you have a peace that you did not have before, even with all the struggles? Do you feel that you have that peace with God now?

Bruce: Yes. One good thing about going through the trials is it keeps me remembering who I am and what I am as I go along because I forget sometimes. Everything that I have learned has a very short shelf life. I find when I really struggle, I double up on everything. I pray a little longer. I read a little more. I call my friends and counselors a little more. I share what's going on with me. I catch an extra meeting. If you have that foundation, you know where to go back to.

One time I was telling my counselor that I was having a vicious battle with depression. He said two things. One, I have to accept the fact that I suffer from clinical depression from time to time and learn not to wrestle with it when it comes. That's one thing. Then he told me to write a gratitude letter to God thanking him for all the things in your life as far back as you can remember. I never finished the letter. I got into my third page and it went back to childhood and puppies and a first bicycle and things that I had long forgotten. I went through the recovery with God and the people who helped me and loved me and I realized, my life did not always suck. All I could think of right then when I was feeling sorry for myself was my horses are too slow, the purses are too cheap, life stinks.

All the things that I thought I wanted then, I don't want now. I have what I need. I don't need a home with eight rooms that I am not going to use. I don't need that. I used to want all that. I envied people who had it. I wanted what this guy had or what that guy had. I have been able to release that. When I am on a good spell, it's real good. When I am not, I look at it as part of my foundation. It toughens me up. It makes me see what I am made of. I like it a lot better when I'm coaching someone else through their troubles. Some of the other things I learned were to send people flowers while they are alive. Don't wait for the funeral. Now I get on a plane if somebody is sick and go visit. Even if I miss a day of racing, I'll fly down and I will sit by their bedside and talk about God and make sure they are all right with Jesus and say a prayer. I do that today, because I was taught to do it. That is what I have come to believe. I used to do everything for me. Even if I was sober enough to go to the store and buy Christmas presents and put them in the mail, I did it because I wanted people to say, "Look, what Bruce got me for Christmas." I wasn't doing it for them. That was a tough one to swallow, trying to play the big shot. I used to just want to write them a check, but never give my time. I was too selfish for that. I didn't want to do any service for them. Now I like to write them a letter and say, "How are you doing?" Take some time. Go and visit.

Jack: When you think about horses, you better than anyone know if you have a dozen horses in your stable, they all have different abilities. They all have different potential. I believe that your desire as a trainer, as a driver, would be to bring out the best potential of each horse. You would never expect a \$4000 claiming horse to race like an open horse, but you expect him to be the best \$4000 claimer that he can be. I think that God looks at us like that. If we do that we can expect when we get to heaven we will hear, "Well done good and faithful servant, come share your Master's happiness." It is not based on our accomplishments; it is based on our obedience. God said in the book of James there would be trials and tribulations and then He said, "I am going to use them to mold and shape you into the man that I want you to be so your joy will be complete." God is doing all this for our benefit!

Bruce, you have the passion for lost people in the world and those struggling with addiction and other issues. This is the God's mission for you. This is how he is using you. I look at it as if you are the luckiest guy in the world. Not because you took the wrong road, but because you were on that road. You saw other people there and saw they were going to die. You knew they were going to hell for all eternity, apart from knowing and accepting God. Many of them, now because of YOU, are going to be alive. You showed them the light both in an earthly way with the benefits of the 12-step program and in a heavenly way with the eternal saving gospel of Jesus Christ. I am excited that you are at the stage in your life where God is using you. It doesn't hurt that you just happen to be a great harness driver, which is clearly what God called you to do and

where he placed you so he could use you for His kingdom. Have you learned any lessons from your experience with horses that apply to your life?

Bruce: A friend of mine in Maine works with clients and horses as a part of a recovery therapy program. She's amazing. You pick the horse you want to work with, you make your horse turn around. You make it trot. Basically you have to control it by the way you communicate with it. I was up there one day and she said, "Bruce, it's your turn." I'm in there and I'm doing it and she said "Okay make her trot." and I give the horse a little tap on the butt to make her trot, she walked three steps and stopped. And my friend says to me again, "Make her trot." So I tried it again and the horse walked three or four steps and stopped again. My friend said, "Come here" and asked me, "How does doing what you just did apply in your personal relationships at home?" Then asked me the same question again!

Well, I finally figured it out. It was all about communication. It's not enough to know what I am saying. I need to make sure I understand what people hear. I used to keep trying to communicate something with whoever I was living with at the time, but I wouldn't do it right. So I got frustrated, if they weren't doing what I wanted and I would just give up. I would just go on about my business. Go to the gym. Go to my 12-step meetings and eventually my relationships would blow up because of a failure to communicate. So I learned to keep asking, to keep communicating until I got it right! It's that simple.

Jack: Have you ever seen first hand the direct results of God using you to bring others closer to Him?

Bruce: Funny you should ask. I'll tell you the most amazing story of all. Maybe three years ago, I spoke with my brother, probably for the first time since I'd been really sober this time and found God. I think that we disliked each other all of our life. We fought from the time we were kids. I had nothing to do with him and wanted nothing to do with him. We got into a real drunken physical altercation one time. It got real ugly. So anyway, I was up there and I was working on making amends to him. When I told him all the things that I was thinking about him, he was thinking the same about me. I thought I had treated him bad and it turned out he thought the same thing about me.

Come to find out he had his struggles with life, too. He had gone through all that same 10 years worth of crap that I had. He drove a truck for a delivery service, one of those early morning delivery guys, so I called him early in the morning and I told him about the 12-step program and what God is doing in my life. Based on experience I could tell he wasn't going to go that route. I asked him if he knew the definition of insanity? I told him it was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. I said, "I want you to do me a favor. I want you to find a Christian radio station and listen to at least one song a day." That's all I said. I did not hear from him for almost 2 weeks. I called him and he said, "You won't believe what happened." I said, "What happened? He said, "I turned the radio on and they were doing that prayer. Turn your life around and give your life to Jesus. He said he cried uncontrollably on and off for 12 straight days. He joined the church and when he is not working, or sleeping he is studying the Bible. He married a Christian woman in Illinois. I went to the wedding. They have since moved to Maine and they drive around all the time right down to the city and he will witness to everyone. He has got it. I think he is over-the-top for God in the best possible way.

Jack: Your ministry is as equal, effective and as worthy to God as his is. You are each doing God's will and that makes you a champion for God, and that's title you can never lose! It's yours for all eternity. Bruce, thank you for meeting with me today. Our time together has been a blessing for me. I know all the CHHA members will be inspired by your story and it will be our privilege to continue to pray that God uses you mightily, as he has been doing, to glorify Himself and build the kingdom. God bless you!

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CHRISTIAN HARNESS HORSEMEN'S ASSOCIATION
"Serving Jesus Christ in Harness Racing"
157 North Main Street, Salem, NH 03079
603-898-1927

