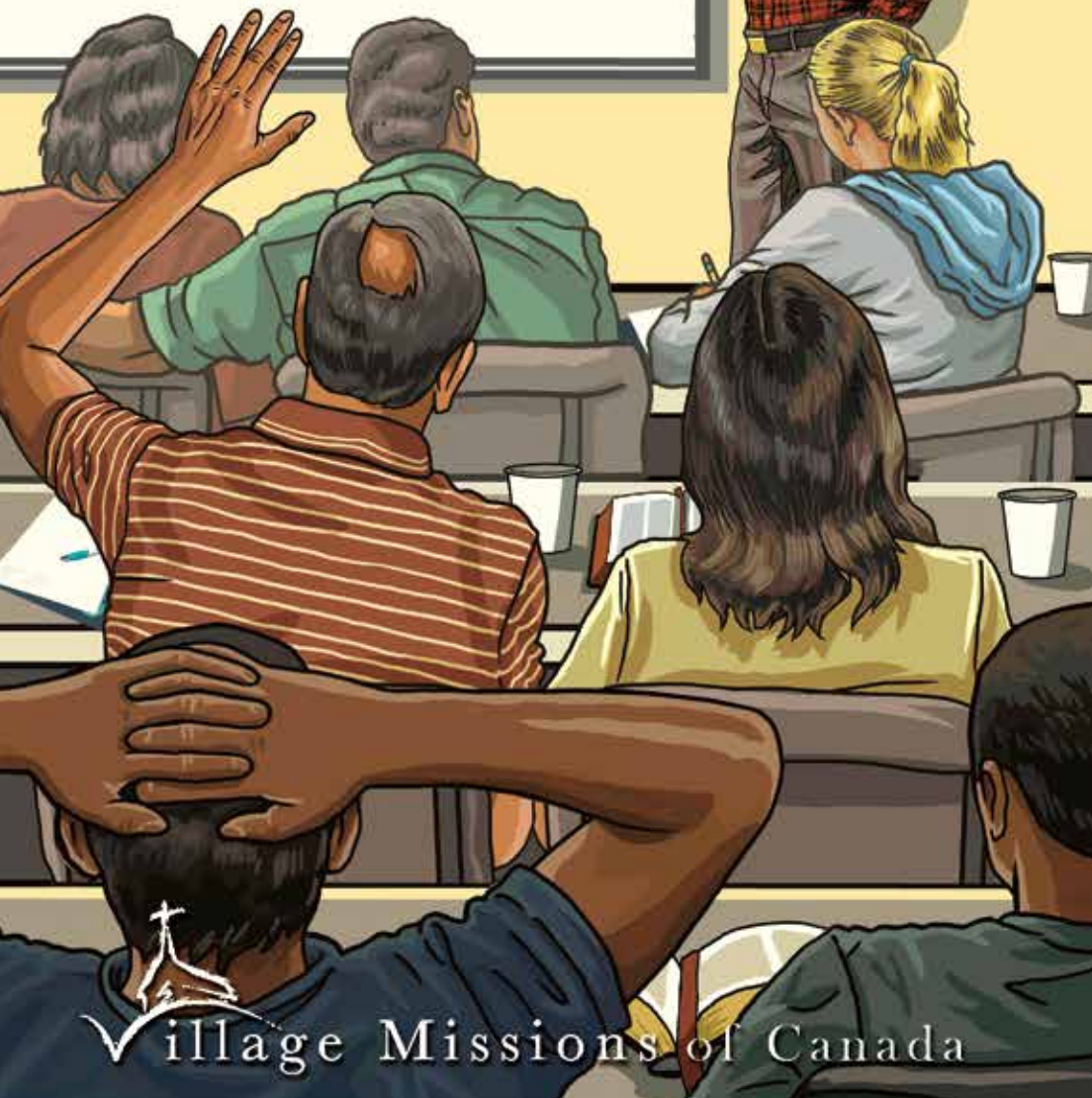


COUNTRY Matters



A CONTENDERS DISCIPLESHIP INITIATIVE

*contend for the faith that was once
for all delivered to the saints.*





A View From the Country

with Murray Graham, Executive Director

"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3, ESV)

This verse inspired the name of the Contenders Discipleship Initiative (CDI). This two-year Bible school began at Machias Community Church in Machias, WA, in 1995, created by Village Missionary Ron Sallee.

From its humble origins, the Lord has used this program in extraordinary ways.

In 2014, a generous estate gift helped propel CDI into an online, tuition-free Bible school—accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Today, we continue to be amazed at how the Lord has worked through CDI, including in rural Canada.

Here are just a few ways:

❖ 3 Village Missionary couples currently serving in rural Canada have gone through the CDI program:

- Joe & Laura Letourneau – Marysville, BC
- Jay (& Kaylee) Foster – Amaranth, MB
- Bill & Kathleen Mann – Progress, BC, interns

❖ Churches across North America—both VM and non-VM—and around the world are using CDI.

We know that CDI has helped many believers in their knowledge of Scripture and walk with the Lord. But we wanted to investigate and see for ourselves the impact that the Contenders Discipleship Initiative has on students.

So in 2020, Village Missions conducted an in-depth study that explored how exactly CDI is changing lives and equipping believers.

In this edition of Country Matters, I would like to share with you some of the highlights from our research. I hope you find them as encouraging as they are enlightening.

Most of all, I hope that you will rejoice at how the Lord is using this program to strengthen His saints and build His kingdom—in rural Canada & across the world.

Serving our Savior together,

Murray Graham

Murray Graham, Executive Director



From left to right: the Letourneau family, Jay & Kaylee Foster, Bill & Kathleen Mann

THE RESEARCH

In the fall of 2020, Village Missions partnered with Project Impact, a research institution that helps nonprofits and organizations learn to measure the impact of their work.

A five-member team at Village Missions interviewed and surveyed CDI students across the country, and then compiled the results into a complete study.

Here are some of the highlights of our research!



#1 EQUIPPED FOR STUDY

"The way I study the Bible now is completely 180 degrees from what it was before I learned about CDI."

Knowing how to properly study God's Word can be challenging for even the strongest of believers. But thanks

My confidence that I can study and understand a biblical text:



to CDI, many students now have the tools they need to properly interpret and study Scripture.

In the first course, **Bibliology and How to Study the Bible**, students are introduced to helpful resources that aid them in their personal studies. These tools include Bible dictionaries, language concordances, and online software like E-Sword.

Many students noted that the skills they acquired in Bibliology have greatly aided them as they continue to study God's Word.

One student powerfully shared that CDI has helped unlock "an entire universe of information" about God and His Word!

#2 GAINING CONFIDENCE

"I not only know what the Bible teaches, but where to find those truths in Scripture."

One of the most common themes we saw among these CDI students was their increasing confidence that they



My understanding of major biblical doctrines:



My confidence that I can support most biblical doctrines from Scripture:



understand what Scripture teaches and their ability to answer questions about the Bible.

A remarkable 86% of students reported that they can now support most Biblical doctrines from Scripture on their own after taking CDI!

Their newfound confidence has also produced humility and grace. They have a greater understanding of God's Word, and they can extend grace to those who doubt or have questions.

One student humbly shared, *"I was never open. I let people know I was a Christian, but I would never get in conversations about Scripture. So I've never witnessed until taking the CDI courses."*

#3 DIGGING THEIR OWN WELLS

"It's the difference between drawing fresh water from a well I dug, rather than dipping water from someone else's pond."



Sometimes Christians can fall into the trap of relying too much on their church or pastor for their spiritual growth. But we were ecstatic to see that many CDI students are now taking responsibility to study Scripture for themselves!

Their new skills and growing confidence motivate these believers to dig into God's Word on their own.

Our data also shows that as students continue learning and strengthening their skills, they can also:

- ❏ Engage difficult passages of Scripture more confidently, whereas they might have skipped over them before.

- ❏ Communicate the gospel to others more clearly and frequently.

Applying the principles of sound biblical interpretation:



One student remarked on the sovereignty of God in his studies – *“My study of the Bible seems to provide timely answers to questions I am asked... I find joy in God’s timing!”*

#4 ACTIVE DISCIPLE-MAKERS

"I'm excited about what God is doing with my study of Scripture, and I want to see other people have that same experience!"

A very encouraging find from our research shows that students are now more proactively investing in the spiritual development of others!

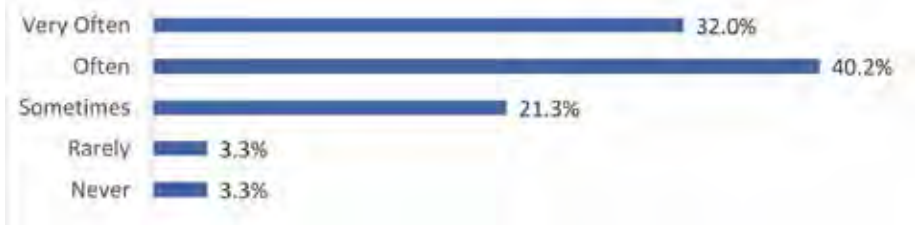


Our data reveal that as students experience Scripture's power and the Holy Spirit's work in their lives, they desire to see others have this same growth.

Several inspiring facts include:

- ❖ More than half of students are investing in the lives of at least one Christian.
- ❖ 57% are actively disciplining others.
- ❖ 72% often or very often encourage other Christians to use their gifts to serve God.

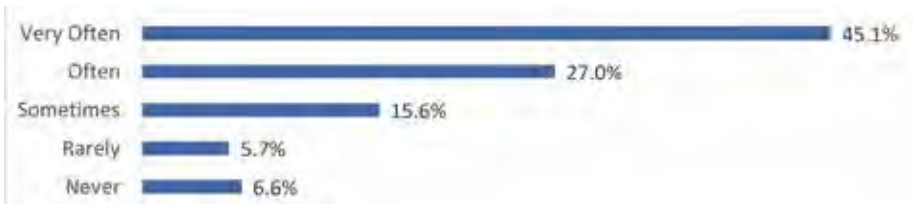
Because of CDI, I encourage other Christians to use their gifts to serve God:



We are confident that these patterns of intentionally cultivating growth in others can result in many lives being transformed!

Just as one student shared, *"I would say that I have gone from a desire to teach knowledge, to a desire to help transform lives."*

Because of CDI, I now serve in ministry in my church:



GOD ON THE MOVE

"I would have never seen myself where I am now if it wasn't for CDI."

And there are many more incredible ways that the Lord has worked in the lives of these CDI students!



❖ They have a passionate desire to keep learning and growing in their knowledge and relationship with God

❖ They know how to prioritize theological beliefs, and have grace towards other viewpoints

❖ They are eager to serve in their local Body of Christ and be “doers of the Word”

❖ And more!

We knew the Lord has been doing amazing things through the Contenders Discipleship Initiative since its inception 26 years ago.

And to see the impact of CDI on a broader scale has only heightened our excitement for what the Lord will continue to do in the lives of more students!

We pray that more churches and people in rural North America and across the globe would benefit from this free biblical education.

May more saints be equipped, more faiths strengthened, and more lives transformed!



“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

- Colossians 1:9-10, ESV

Would you like to read the entire CDI Impact Study? You can find it at vmcdi.com.

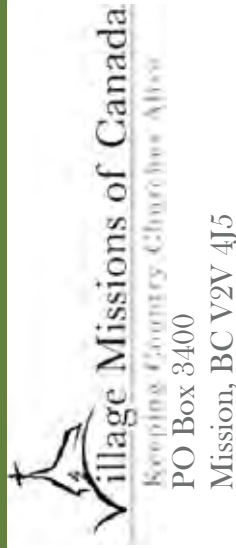
Would you join the action and be a part of what the Lord is doing through the Contenders Discipleship Initiative? Here are a few ways you can partner with us today:

Enroll! CDI is available online, tuition-free, for anyone—individual students, bible studies, Sunday School classes, etc. Sign up here - vmcontenders.org/all-courses/

Read! You can access the full study here:

Give! CDI may be free but making these resources available at no-charge is not. You can help keep this biblical education accessible to anyone who wants to grow in their faith. Visit here to invest a life-changing gift - villagemissions.ca/give-cdi/

USA: villagemissions.org 800.617.9905 | Canada: villagemissions.ca 866.885.3885



Helping Country Churches Thrive