

The Literacy Crisis Among Our Children—and Why It Matters for Eternity by Brad Harrub

God chose to reveal Himself through one form of media—the written word. Yes I know podcasts and videos exist, but only God’s Word is inspired! And let’s be honest for a moment, the Bible is not a simplistic book. It contains history, poetry, prophecy, theology, and complex argumentation. Understanding Scripture requires reading stamina, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension skills.

Consider passages like:

- Paul’s extended theological reasoning in Romans
- The layered warnings and exhortations in Hebrews
- The prophetic imagery of Daniel or Revelation
- Even Jesus’ parables, which require inference and reflection

A child who struggles to comprehend basic texts will almost inevitably skip over difficult Bible passages, rely solely on surface-level summaries, or disengage altogether when Scripture demands effort. The problem today is not that Scripture has become harder—but that readers have become weaker. Scripture itself calls for active, thoughtful reading: “Meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8). Meditation assumes comprehension. And comprehension assumes literacy. If children are not trained to read deeply, they will struggle to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The result is not just ignorance, but vulnerability—to false teaching, shallow theology, and spiritual apathy.

Parents: God’s Designated Literacy Teachers: While schools play an important role, Scripture places the primary responsibility for instruction squarely on parents. “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Decades of educational research confirm that parental involvement in reading is one of the strongest predictors of literacy success. Children who are read to regularly develop larger vocabularies, stronger comprehension skills, and greater motivation to read independently (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, *Joint Book Reading Makes for Success in Learning to Read*, *Review of Educational Research*, 1995).

Literacy is not accidental. It is cultivated. So how can we be proactive for future generations?

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Brushy church of Christ

774 Hwy 48 South
Centerville TN 37033



The Brushy Beacon

"Abounding in the Word in 2026"

February 1, 2026

9 a.m. Sunday Bible Class

10 a.m. Sunday Morning Worship

6 p.m. Sunday Evening Worship

7 p.m. Wednesday Bible Study

Elders

Ricky Atkinson

James Atkinson

Tony Duncan

Deacons

Paul Johnston Terry Banks

Justin Atkinson Caleb Truett

Kevin Johnston

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My home congregation is studying the book of Isaiah on Wednesday nights. The way Isaiah writes is amazing—he paints vivid word pictures. But some of the words and phrases Isaiah uses are different from our everyday language. And it got me to wondering how many of our young people can really comprehend what Isaiah was even saying? A quiet crisis is unfolding in America, and it affects not just in our classrooms, but also our homes and churches. Children today are reading less, understanding less, and possessing smaller vocabularies than previous generations. Sadly, we have become a sound bite nation that loves videos and video games. While educators worry about test scores and graduation rates, Christians must recognize something even more serious: this literacy decline directly affects a child’s ability to read, understand, and remain faithful to God’s Word.

The data is sobering. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—often called “the Nation’s Report Card”—40% of fourth graders and 33% of eighth graders score below “basic” reading levels (NAEP, 2022). “Below basic” does not mean struggling with advanced texts; it means difficulty identifying main ideas, understanding sequence, or making simple inferences from what is read (National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Reading Report, 2022). Even more concerning, reading scores dropped sharply after 2020 (Covid) and have not recovered, reaching the lowest levels seen in decades (NCES, 2022). Research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that nearly two-thirds (65%) of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient readers, a benchmark strongly predictive of future academic failure and disengagement (Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*, 2012).

Because they are not reading much, vocabulary size has declined as well. Linguistic research consistently reveals that children who read less are exposed to fewer words, which restricts vocabulary growth and comprehension ability (Cunningham & Stanovich, *What Reading Does for the Mind*, *American Educator*, 1998). In short, children are not just reading fewer pages—they are encountering fewer ideas.

Why This Is a Spiritual Emergency: *Continued on Page 4...*

Family News & Notes

Welcome We are so glad you are here and welcome you to a time of Bible teaching and worship. We hope you will come and worship with us again!

We Rejoice with the Angels in Heaven... Ella Truett, daughter of Caleb & Paige, was baptized on Sunday, January 18, 2026, by James Atkinson. She is the granddaughter of James and Kim Atkinson and Lisa Truett, and the great granddaughter of Glenda Tanner. Continue to pray for Ella!

Team 1 – Compassion Card Group You will need to sign cards today in the Ladies Classroom following the morning worship service. It will not take you long. Please see Tony or Cathy if you have questions. Jim, Louise, Beverly Jim, & Pamela Brooks Mark

Cindy, Crystal, Laynie Leland & Savannah Brad, Jacinda, Emma, Lynlee, Ansleigh, Everleigh

A Sweet Baby Is on the Way! Dean, Cecily, and Dustin are joyfully anticipating the arrival of a precious baby boy in March. While he comes in a tiny package with big needs, he might make Dean and Cecily wish that money grew on trees! We have placed a money tree on the table in the auditorium for whomever would like to add to the Baby Fund. We rejoice with this growing family and desire to be a blessing to them, remembering that “**Children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward**” (Psalm 127:3). The tree will be available for the next few Sundays. Please see Kim Atkinson or Paige Truett for additional information.

Guest Missionary Noel & Jesscia Stafford will be here on Wednesday, February 11, to speak on the work going on in Tanzania, Africa. All classes 6th grade and up will remain in the auditorium. We hope you’ll make plans to attend.

Area Wide Gospel Singing You are invited to attend a special night of singing, praise, and devotion to our Heavenly Father. Brushy will host the area wide singing on Friday, February 13. We need your help to provide a meal for 75-80. Sub sandwiches and drinks will be provided. There will be a singup sheet for soups, cookies, and brownies. Please see Kim or Cathy if you have questions.

AED/CPR Class If you would be interested in taking a CPR class or learning how to use the AED machine, please see Jim Brooks. When he has a total number of people interested, he will get the date and time for a class.

A Note from Robin Walters... I will be having 1 treatment a week for 12 weeks. So many wonderful cards and blessings from your church... I am truly encouraged every time I receive a beautiful handwritten card. I pray God blesses everyone of you bountifully! I am in great spirits and I am fighting. At the top of my goal is a “Brushy Church visit.”

*Robin lives in Florida and is fighting cancer. We have been sending her compassion cards. If you know of someone we could send a card to, please submit their name in the box.

A Happy Birthday to... Matthew Quillen...February 4

Upcoming Events

*Wednesday, February 11 ~ Noel Stafford to give a report on Mission work in Tanzania, Africa

*Friday, February 13 ~ Brushy hosts the Area Wide Singing Eat at 5:30 Sing at 7 (Kim A. & Cathy)

*Saturday, February 21 ~ Wedding Shower for Trey Johnston & Claudia Chilton at 1 P.M.

*Sunday, February 22 ~ 4th Sunday Singing Night with CJ Hinson Speaking

*Saturday, February 28 ~ Eat at a Restaurant in lieu of Valentine Banquet at 5:30 (Kim A. & Cathy)

Pray for Those Sick Among Us...

Tony Duncan is recovering after surgery.

Elaine Jones sister of Louise Adams, will have some radiation treatments

Darlene Donaldson sister in law of Anita Quillen, is recovering after having a stroke.

Bobby McFarlin is recovering after having a stroke.

Sandy McFarlin is dealing with health issues.

Al Baltz is recovering after hip surgery

Jenny Tanner sister of Kim Freeman, will have back surgery on February 10.

Continuing Prayer Requests

Dealing with Cancer - Glen Herrington, Mauve McDonald, Robin Walters

Special Requests - Miranda Smith, Judy Goodman, Annis Womack, Karen Bowen, Vera Woods, Paul Johnston, James & Helen Bryant, Tony Duncan

Pray for Those in Nursing Homes

Fred Bowman (Murfreesboro); Jimmy Garner (Perry Co.); Carl Bryant (Life Care Cen’t)

Ongoing Prayer Reminders

- All in the military and civil workers overseas and their families right.
- All those Preaching and teaching the Good News all over the world.
- Our Government Leaders – Local, State, and National (1 Timothy 2:1-2).
- Our Elders and Deacons who oversee, care for, serve, and feed us spiritually. (Heb. 13:7)

A 4-Step Action Plan for Christian Parents by Brad Harrub

The following is a four step plan for parents to help their children become better readers. This is not all encompassing, but it will definitely give them a good headstart. It is OK for you as a parent to tell them to turn off the video games and encourage them to grab a book.

1. **Restore Daily Reading in the Home!** Set aside time each day for reading—especially during the early years. Read real books, not just screens. Physical books slow the mind, improve retention, and encourage deeper engagement [This is purely opinion, but I am a big fan of young and older alike, using a hard copy of the Bible.]

2. **Read Scripture Aloud and Talk About It!** Hearing Scripture strengthens language processing and comprehension. Ask questions: What does this mean? Why did God say it this way? Teach children that the Bible is meant to be understood—not skimmed.

3. **Build Vocabulary Intentionally!** Stop and explain unfamiliar words—both in books and in the Bible. Vocabulary is a gateway to theology. A child who doesn’t understand words like covenant, sacrifice, redemption, or justification will struggle to grasp the gospel itself.

4. **Model What You Want Them to Become!** Children who see parents reading—especially reading Scripture—are far more likely to become readers themselves. Literacy is caught as much as it is taught. Conclusion: The literacy crisis is not merely an educational concern—it is a salvation issue. If our children cannot read well, they will struggle to know God well. And if they struggle to know His Word, they will struggle to remain faithful when life and doctrine become difficult. Parents must act. Not tomorrow. Not when school improves. Now. If they can’t read well, they will not be able to defend their faith well! Teach them to read. Teach them to understand. Teach them to love God’s