

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Living Longer Through Joy

*Living Longer Through Joy: What Science and Scripture Both Know*

One of the most fascinating studies about happiness and longevity comes from an unexpected source: a convent.

The “Nun Study,” conducted from 1930 through the 1990s, followed nearly 200 young women as they began their lives of service. Before taking their vows, each wrote about their hopes, dreams, and life outlook. Decades later, researchers made a remarkable discovery when they analyzed these writings.

Among all the factors studied – intelligence, background, education – only one consistently predicted longevity: a positive attitude. The numbers were striking. More than 90% of the nuns who expressed joy and optimism in their early writings lived to age 85 or beyond. Among those whose writings showed less enthusiasm for life, only about a third reached that age.

This scientific finding echoes ancient wisdom that spiritual leaders have shared for generations. Rabbi Shne’ur Zalman of Liadi, a great Torah luminary, compared the battle against negative thoughts to a wrestling match. Even the strongest wrestler will lose if they approach the match with lethargy and fatigue. Similarly, no one can overcome life’s challenges while weighed down by sadness.

Modern life presents countless reasons to feel discouraged. News cycles bombard us with troubling headlines. Social media feeds overflow with carefully curated images that can make anyone feel inadequate. Healthcare costs rise while retirement savings don’t fully cover the cost of living. Adult children move far away, and longtime friends relocate to be closer with children.

Yet within these challenges lies an empowering truth: while we cannot control our circumstances, we maintain complete control over our response to them. Viktor Frankl, the renowned psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust, documented this profound human capacity. Even in humanity’s darkest hour, he witnessed individuals who maintained their inner light through conscious choice.

Frankl shared the story of a young woman in the concentration camps who, despite knowing her death was imminent, maintained her cheerful spirit. She told him she was grateful for her hardships because they had led her to discover her spiritual strength. As Frankl concluded, no one can take away our fundamental freedom to choose our attitude in any situation.

But how exactly does joy break through life’s barriers? The answer lies in both spiritual and practical realms. The Zohar, an important Jewish mystical text, teaches that human actions and attitudes create ripples in the spiritual world. When people choose joy, they open channels for divine blessings to flow more freely. This profound idea appears in Psalm 100:2, which instructs believers to serve God with joy – suggesting that human happiness can actually trigger divine joy in return. In essence, a positive attitude doesn’t just change our own perspective; it can influence the very nature of the blessings we receive.

This understanding resonates particularly well with Americans who understand that true happiness never depended on material success. The Founding Fathers didn’t guarantee happiness itself in the Declaration of Independence – they protected the right to pursue it. They understood that contentment comes not from external circumstances but from internal choice.

Consider how children approach life. They don’t worry about their social status or bank account balance. They haven’t learned to be self-conscious about their limitations. Instead, they live fully in the moment, finding joy in simple pleasures and maintaining a natural sense of wholeness. Their happiness flows not from what they possess but from their freedom from self-absorption.

As people age, they often become increasingly focused on what they lack – better health, more time, greater financial security. But this self-focus actually blocks the path to contentment. Traditional wisdom teaches that joy breaks through barriers. When people stop obsessing over their own happiness and instead focus on how they can benefit others, their natural joy returns.

President John F. Kennedy captured this timeless principle in his inaugural address when he urged Americans to “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Though he spoke of national service, this wisdom extends far beyond politics. It speaks to a fundamental truth about human nature: genuine fulfillment comes not from what we receive, but from what we give. Whether serving at a local food bank, mentoring young people, or simply being there for neighbors in need, turning attention outward creates a powerful shift in perspective. Problems that seemed overwhelming become manageable. Limitations that felt constricting become less important.

The message from both modern research and ancient wisdom is clear: happiness isn’t a result of good fortune – it’s a choice that creates good fortune. Those nuns who lived longer didn’t have easier lives than their sisters. They simply chose to approach life with optimism and purpose.

In today’s world, this message carries special relevance. While no one can control the news cycle or the economy, everyone can decide how to face each day. By choosing joy, maintaining perspective, and focusing on others’ needs rather than personal wants, anyone can tap into a deeper wellspring of happiness – one that adds not just years to life, but life to years.

*Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports communities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at y@tasteoftorah.org.*

### Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write.

Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

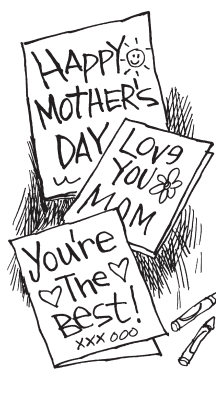
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YOUR KIDS MADE  
YOU BREAKFAST  
AND CARDS ALL  
BY HAND.



TO SAY THAT  
THEY LOVE YOU  
AND THAT  
YOU ARE GRAND.



'CAUSE YOU KNOW  
THAT WAS SPECIAL  
AND IT MUST HAVE  
BEEN TOUGH...



TO PUT DOWN  
THEIR CELLPHONES  
TO MAKE ALL  
THAT STUFF.



## Biscuit

I don’t like cats. Cats are nasty, petty, self absorbed and murderous. They kill songbirds just for sport and ignore the mice that eat the wires under the hood of my truck. The cat in my lap thinks she’s the queen of the universe. I’m ready to be adored. Nowwww. Nowwww.

I like dogs. Dogs are here to teach us things humans need to know, like unconditional love and how to wake up in a good mood. There’s nothing we need to learn from cats. Humans are already adept at begging and complaining, and most of us know how to poop in a box.

Cats sharpen their claws on your furniture. They leave their undigestibles behind the sofa. They enjoy knocking things over. They’re like goats.

I don’t like goats. Goats are escape artists. I once parked my car next to a fence around some goats, the front bumper just a few inches from the wire. As the sun went down, we saw the goats gathering next to the fence opposite my car. We thought they were just curious.

All night they studied the situation and discussed it amongst themselves using that goat sign language they broadcast with their tails. In the morning we heard a strange metallic rumbling. The goats were reaching through the wire and using my bumper as a step up onto the hood, over the fence, onto the roof of my car, and gone. Every single goat escaped, and we spent half a day catching them all. Goats and cats are cut from the same cloth, and I don’t like them.

I like bears. We have an understanding with our personal bear. I leave the gate open to the chicken pen so she can, on occasion, clean up the leftover chicken feed, which I consider a service to our community that deprives the mice of a meal. More meals means more mice, and I don’t like mice. If I forget to leave the gate open, Ursula will make her own. That is inconvenient, but sometimes friendship involves sacrifice.

I like crows. Crows are highly intelligent. They recognize individuals and vehicles. They are better watchdogs than watchdogs. There is nothing that goes on in the cove that they don’t see and report on. Most people don’t understand crows. Farmers shoot them. One distant neighbor puts them on spikes like Vlad the Impaler, but crows have long memories and a highly refined sense of justice. The grandchildren of those crows will remember the offense and continue to steal sprouts from the grandchildren of that gardener.

For as long as I have lived in this house, the crows have nested and gathered on the ridge above us. I have never injured them, and they have never once removed a sprout of corn from the garden they fly over every day.

Like cats, crows are highly opinionated, but they are not demanding. Cats are never satisfied. Special food for tender digestive systems. Special beds for their posture. I’m ready to be brushed again. Don’t stop. If you pull your hand away, I’m going to hook it with my paw. Let me just bite your knuckle a bit to remind you that if I were bigger, I could eat you.

I don’t like cats so much that we reluctantly just added a third member to the clan. Someone abandoned him or threw him away. He showed up begging on a cold winter night. He was rude to our girls. The pups chased him off. I shot over him with a loud bang. I drenched him with a bucket of water. Still, he came.

One day I noticed there were fewer mice around the barn. That’s when I made the classic mistake. I gave him some food. It was a moment of weakness, I know, but I was tired and he was making that annoying, moaning hungry sound cats make that jars the human nervous system to the point where your only choices are to shoot them or feed them. So I fed him, and he rubbed against my leg like they do.

He’s actually quite the handsome fellow, if you like cats, and his head is in the Encyclopedia of Southern Tradition under “cathead biscuit.” So we call him Biscuit. Biscuit Balzac. And, as you might imagine, whoever threw him away neglected to neuter him first, so Biscuit is due to become a tenor instead of a basso profundo. That’s how we get even with the cats we don’t like.

## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b>		
School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm	
<b>Every Tuesday:</b>		
Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am	
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b>		
Hiaw. City Council... City Hall	6 pm	
YH City Council... YH City Hall	6:30 pm	
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b>		
Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm	
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b>		
Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm	
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b>		
Commissioner’s Mtg... Courthouse	5:30 pm	
City of Young Harris Planning Commission...		
Meeting Room in City Hall	5 pm	
TC Water Authority Board Meeting	6 pm	

## Hay Testing

Hay testing is an important part of any livestock management program. If you feed hay, it’s important to know the quality of the hay. Without performing a hay test, you don’t know the quality of the hay.

Feeding hay that is poor quality can lead to an impaction in the animal’s stomach. Essentially, what happens is that the hay fed to cattle has a lot of fiber in it. Lots of fiber in hay without nutrition means that the cattle can’t properly digest the forage. Cattle will eat enough forage to be full, but all that indigestible forage creates an impaction in their rumen. The effects of cattle eating low quality

hay and getting an impaction can range from calving issues, to diarrhea, to weight loss, and even death.

When cattle start to die because of poor quality hay, usually you will have at least a few cattle go down. Forage quality issues can be made worse if they are combined with supplements that stimulate forage intake, because then cattle are eating more of the low quality hay. The best treatment for low quality forage is to know ahead of time about the quality of your hay. The only way that you can do that is through hay testing.

Body Condition Scoring (BCS...not referring to college football) also shows how important hay quality is. BCS is an index that measures the health of the animal based on how fleshy or boney the animal is. The scale ranges from 1-9. A one is a severely emaciated cow. Bones in the shoulders, back, and ribs are clearly visible. A BCS of one is rarely seen in the field. A BCS of nine is a very obese animal and its mobility is impaired by excessive fat. This score is also rarely seen in the field. In cows, you ideally want a BCS of five to be maintained for calving. If BCS drops to a four then your calving interval will increase. Typically a BCS of five will give you conception rates of >85% and calving every 360-370 days. A BCS of four or lower means calving will be >380 days. Cows will require high quality forage for about 70 days to go from a BCS of 4 to 5.

We have three main tests for hay. The basic one costs \$26 and will tell the moisture, fiber, crude protein, lignin, total digestible nutrients, and give you a relative forage quality (RFQ). The RFQ is an index that will give you a number to give you a reference on the quality of your hay. Dry cows do not need as high of an RFQ compared to gestating cows, or cows with a calf that they are feeding. Above the basic test is a \$31 test that is the basic test + nitrates. Above that is a \$48 test that is basic + nitrates + minerals.

A single hay test can cover an entire hay lot. A hay lot would be all the hay from a particular field at the same cutting. I have a hay probe in my office and I would be happy to come out and collect the hay sample for you. Once we’ve processed a hay sample, I can help you come up with a balanced ration to get you through the hay feeding months. If you think you have some good quality hay let me know, and we can submit a sample to the Southeastern Hay Contest. Generally, you want to let the hay it in the hay barn for about 2 weeks before testing it.

Quality forage when grass isn’t growing is a big part of any livestock operation, not matter how big or small. If you have questions about hay testing contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Letters To The Editor

### No More Taxpayer Funding of PBS, NPR

Dear Editor,

Due to their blatant bias, which is well-documented, President Trump recently signed an executive order which would cease any taxpayer funding for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR). These entities are free to operate as they wish but must do so on their own dime. Americans, who have diverse viewpoints, should not be forced to pay for content that they don’t support. This is another smart move by the Trump Administration to protect American taxpayers.

Tim Groza

### Speak Up to Protect Our Lakes

Dear Editor,

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has announced plans that could leave Lake Chatuge drawn down for up to eight years while they reconstruct the spillway at Chatuge Dam. According to TVA’s own filing, the lake could sit 10 feet below winter pool (elevation 1908’) for most of the next decade.

This would be devastating for North Georgia’s tourism, small businesses, property values, and the lake environment. Even if you don’t live on Chatuge, the stakes are high and Blue Ridge and Nottely could be next.

TVA is accepting public comments through May 28. Please email your concerns to nepa@tva.gov and contact your elected officials. Ask them to push TVA for better alternatives and independent oversight. We need modern solutions—not a decade-long disaster.

Josh Murauskas

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