

Faith Digest

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Polluted lower Jordan River an endangered site. The lower portion of the Jordan River is so polluted, the World Monuments Fund has designated it an “[Endangered Cultural Heritage Site](#).” The international body for the protection of monuments recently placed the river revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims on the organization’s “watch list” of 100 endangered sites. About 90 percent of the river’s natural water flow has been diverted by Israel, Jordan and Syria for domestic and agricultural use, with sewage flowing in its place, according to Friends of the Earth Middle East, an environmental organization with offices in Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

Network takes over struggling biblical theme park. [Trinity Broadcasting Network](#) has become the new owner of the Holy Land Experience, a biblical theme park in Orlando, Fla. The ownership change came as five members of the network’s leadership team—including TBN founders Paul and Janice Crouch and their son—were announced as new board members of the theme park. The Orlando Sentinel reported the tourist attraction—which features music, drama and portrayals of Jesus’ ministry, death and resur-rection—has experienced financial troubles and declining attendance.

Does this pew make me look fat? Highly religious people are the least likely to think of themselves as fat, a new study from Cornell University reveals. In fact, they often thought they were thinner than they actually were. Researcher Karen Kim speculates that religion “encourages self-worth beyond the body” and protects people from the ideal body imagery that pervades popular culture. The study looked at more than 3,000 men and women in six categories—conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, other religions and no religion. Participants were asked whether they were very or somewhat overweight, very or somewhat underweight or about right. The accuracy of their perceptions was measured against medical standards. The one exception to the correlation between strong religious commitment and good body image: Jewish women. They tended to overestimate their weight.

Sheep shear church lawn, save parish money. A church vicar in Devon, England, has found the best answer to keeping his two-acre churchyard tidy and the grass mowed is a flock of sheep. John Leonard, vicar of Kingskerswell, acquired the sheep 18 months ago to help maintain the grounds of the next-door manor house. Leonard said he meant to buy four lambs that would be sent off for slaughter after a year. But he ended up with four “Jacob” sheep, a rare breed that tradition says are descendants of the flock kept by the biblical patriarch. He named them Matthew, Mark, Luke and John before realizing they were all female. They were renamed Martha, Marcia, Lucy and Joanna. Using the sheep as lawnmowers has meant a savings of about \$3,000, Leonard said. The sheep have bred. Leonard now has six lambs and says he will keep three and find good homes for the others—as mobile lawnmowers.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.