

November 1, 2011

**To:** Jim Daly and Interested Students of the Family

**Re:** **7 Billion People: Cause for Alarm?**

The United Nations marked October 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 as the day the global population scale would tip the 7 billion mark. But we didn't feel the weight of the world shift just yet.

The U.S. Census Bureau's [World Population Clock](#) has "Baby 7 Billion" arriving closer to March 1, 2012.

But this has many of us asking, "How many people are too many and how do we know?"

This is a very important question for Christians because we don't see people as accidents or problems. Each person's conception, birth and life is a new fleshly manifestation of the very image of God in the world. Each one is to be celebrated, welcomed and cared for as something beautiful from God.

*So how should we feel about our world population reaching 7 billion?*

### **First, we should not be fearful.**

The fear mongering over so-called over-population has been well documented. Here is the opening line from Paul Ehrlich's infamous and fearful *The Population Bomb* (1969) which helped ignite the scare:

"The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate..."

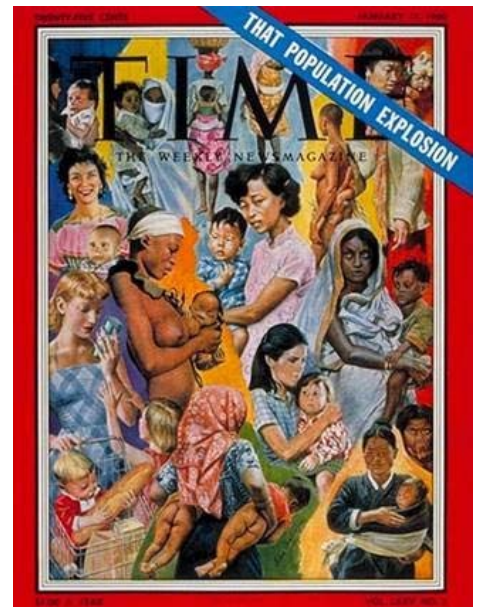
Ehrlich also said that same year...

"If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000."

Here we are in 2011 and the earth's population has doubled since Ehrlich's dramatic predictions and England and quite a few other places are still around. And while all is not well, to be sure, it is far from catastrophic.

### **Second, there is enough food.**

Ehrlich has been one of the latest and loudest disciples of [Thomas Malthus](#), an Anglican clergyman and demographer, who explained in his 1798 work, *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, that the "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man."





# MEMO

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Human population would continue to grow while the production of food would hit its limit. And when this happened, much of the world would die away of mass starvation. Ehrlich warned that the 1970s would be the terminal decade for so many because of this Malthusian rule.

But as [Time magazine](#) reported recently, a billion people tragically go hungry in the world today, “but that is not because the world is not capable of producing enough food for them.” We [already](#) grow enough grain globally today to feed 10 billion people on a full vegetarian diet.

And [worldwide](#), humans currently throw out or waste half of the food we produce. Hence, hunger is not a production problem as Malthus predicted, but a distribution and stewardship problem.

### **Third, there is enough room**

As both *Time* and the [Guardian](#) report, today all 7 billion of us could live in the state of Texas with no more population density than we currently find in New York City.

To make it even more interesting, 7 billion of us could move to Rhode Island and each have 6.4 square feet to wave our arms around in.

All the rest of the world could be used for a healthy balance of preservation and production.

### **Fourth, most of the world is not reproducing anyway.**

According to a brand new [report](#) conducted cooperatively among 6 different universities, the average woman in the developed world only produces 1.66 children in her lifetime, well short of the 2.1 children needed for human replacement.

In fact, in more than 75 countries around the world (42% of the world's population), fertility is below the 2.1 replacement level needed to maintain current work levels as well as the support and care needed for aging populations.

Countries like Japan are now experiencing economic stagnation due to below-replacement fertility levels that started in the 1970s. China achieved this in the early 1990s which will dramatically slow their national prosperity. If sustained, all below-replacement-fertility countries can expect the same stagnation.

Over the last decade, the United States has been just at or below replacement level.

### **Conclusion**

If a nation wants to maintain its economic vitality, it must produce enough people to become the next generation of workers, creators, investors and consumers. And that generation must do the same. These types of people start out as babies and are raised in stable families.

Most nations are not producing enough of either, to their own detriment.

The evidence is clear: People are not problems. Not even 7 billion of them.

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“The answer to anyone who talks about the surplus population is to ask him whether he is the surplus population, or if he is not, how he knows he is not.”

G. K. Chesterton, Introduction to *A Christmas Carol*

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