

how many friends do you have?

Today, modern technology allows us to make hundreds, or even thousands, of social network “friends” by merely adding their names to our list of computer contacts. And when we wish to end one of these “friendships,” we simply delete that person’s name from our list. However, the tragic incident involving the woman in Britain underscores a startling reality—true friendship still eludes many. In fact, one recent survey revealed that although we are socializing more, the number of our truly close friends has decreased.

Consider the following four guiding principles, and note how the Bible's practical advice can help you to be the kind of person others would want as a friend.

## 1. Show That You Really Care

True friendship involves commitment. In other words, a good friend feels a responsibility toward you, and he really cares about you. Of course, such commitment is two-way, and it requires hard work and sacrifice on both sides. But the rewards are worth the effort. Ask yourself, ‘Am I willing to give of myself, my time, and my resources for my friend?’ Remember, to have a good friend, *you* first need to be a good friend.

### WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND

**Irene:** “Like cultivating a beautiful garden, building a friendship requires a lot of time and care. Start by wanting to be a good friend yourself. Be generous in showing affection and personal interest. And be willing to sacrifice your time when you are needed.”

**Luis Alfonso:** “Modern-day society encourages egotism rather than altruism. So it means a lot when someone takes a sincere interest in you without necessarily expecting anything in return.”

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

*“Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them. Practice giving, and people will give to you.” (Luke 6: 31, 38)* Here Jesus recommends true unselfishness and generosity. Such generosity nurtures good friendships. If you expend yourself in behalf of your friends without expecting anything in return, they will naturally feel drawn to you.

## 2. Be a Good Communicator

A true friendship cannot flourish without regular communication. So talk together about the interests you share. Listen to what your friend has to say, and respect his opinions. Whenever possible, commend and encourage him. At times, a friend may need advice or even correction, and that may not always be easy to give. However, a loyal friend will have the courage to point out a serious fault and offer tactful guidance.

### WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND

**Juan:** “A true friend should be able to express his opinions freely but not get upset if you don’t agree.”

**Eunice:** “What I value most are friends who are willing to spend time with me and listen to me, especially when I have problems.”

**Silvina:** “True friends will tell you the truth—even if they know it will hurt—because they have your best interests at heart.”

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

*“Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.” (James 1:19)* Good friends always appreciate a listening ear. Monopolizing the conversation, however, conveys the message that we feel our opinions are more important than theirs. So be attentive when a friend wishes to share his innermost thoughts and concerns. And do not get offended if he is honest with you. “The wounds inflicted by a friend are faithful,” says Proverbs 27:6.



ARE YOU

WILLING TO FORGIVE?

—COLOSSIANS 3:13, 14

### 3. Have Realistic Expectations

The closer we get to a friend, the more likely we are to see his flaws. Our friends are not perfect, but neither are we. Therefore, we should never expect or demand perfection from the people we befriend. Rather, it is good to cherish their virtues and to make allowances for their mistakes.

#### WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND

**Samuel:** “We often have higher expectations of others than we have of ourselves. If we recognize our own mistakes and our own need for forgiveness, then we’re more willing to forgive others.”

**Daniel:** “Accept the fact that your friends will make mistakes. When problems arise, we do well to resolve them quickly and try hard to forget.”

#### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

*“We all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body.” (James 3:2)* Recognizing this simple truth can help us to be understanding toward our friends. That, in turn, will allow us to overlook minor faults and shortcomings that may irritate us. The Bible says: *“Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. . . . But besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.”—Colossians 3:13, 14.*







ARE YOU REACHING OUT  
TO PEOPLE OF ALL KINDS?  
—2 CORINTHIANS 6:13

#### 4. Widen Your Circle of Friends

True, we need to be selective about the people we befriend. But that does not mean narrowing our choice of friends to those of a certain age or upbringing. Taking an interest in people of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and nationalities can truly enrich our lives.

##### WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND

**Unai:** “Making friends with only those who are your age and have the same tastes as you is like wearing clothing in your favorite color all the time. No matter how much you like that color, at some point you may end up getting bored with it.”

**Funke:** “Widening my circle of friends has given me the opportunity to mature as a person. I’ve learned to get along with peo-

ple of all ages and backgrounds, and that has made me more outgoing and adaptable. And my friends really appreciate that.”

##### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

*“So in response—I speak as to my children—you too open your hearts wide.”*  
(2 Corinthians 6:13) The Bible encourages us to reach out to people of all kinds. This inclusive, impartial view of friendship can add variety to your life, as well as endear you to others. ■

Watch the whiteboard animation  
*What’s a Real Friend?* at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org)

