

How Many Friends Can You Handle—Really?

If you needed a friend in the middle of the night, who would you call?

If you're on Facebook, how many friends do you have?



The average

Facebook user has 338 friends.

If you're on Twitter, how many followers do you have?

The average Twitter user has 208 followers.

If you're on Instagram, how many followers do you have?

The average Instagram user has 843 followers.

Have you encountered anyone who has a sense of pride—even braggadocio—because of the number of Facebook friends they have? I don't know if these folks are trying to boost their sense of self-worth or make up for the lonely years in the middle school lunchroom. I wonder.

How many friends can you adequately handle?

150

That's it. Robin Dunbar, an Oxford University anthropologist, says our brains really can't handle more. Even those with large numbers of friends (Facebook allows up to 5,000) only keep an "inner circle" of 150.

I wonder how many of these "friends" are more accurately defined as acquaintances. Maria Konnikova, wrote in the New Yorker:

With social media, we can easily keep up with the lives and interests of far more than a hundred and fifty people. But without investing the face-to-face

time, we lack deeper connections to them, and the time we invest in superficial relationships comes at the expense of more profound ones.

Dunbar also says that we truly only handle five close friends at a time. Only five BFFs.

So if you needed a friend in the middle of the night, who would you call?

Let me ask you to dig further on that. What makes these close friends so close? I believe it goes deeper than just shared interests. You share deeply rooted convictions and commitments.



You gotta love the example of Jonathan and David. Read their account in 1 Samuel and you'll see two people who shared a deeply-rooted

commitment to the God of Israel. They both knew who they could call on in the middle of the night.

We all want a close friend or two like that. The challenge for me is not to find that friend, but to be that friend to others.

- *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up" (Ecc. 4:9-10).*
- *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15: 12-13).*

Be that kind of friend.