

Friendship (9-11-02)

by Jeffrey Caldwell (Redwood City, California)

Friendship -- on the occasion of receiving a card... learned about the roots of the word "friend" ... useful knowledge.

Dear Mike,

I'm not much into cutesy stuff and may not be the warmest friend one can find, but hope to prove reliable, at least. It's a good thing to think about.

The Lord said: "You are my friends if you do what I command." With insights more generally on friendship: "I have called you friends, for everything I learned from my father I have made known to you." He shared what was precious to him.

I'm glad you sent me the cutesy card because I have just made a most marvelous discovery! I got curious about the dictionary definition and, even more, derivation of the word "friend", so I traced it to its Indo-European root, which, according to my dictionary, is "pri-"; the legend for it says: "Important derivatives are free, filibuster, friend, afraid, and Friday."

So the word "friend" has interesting and -- every one, strangely, appropriate -- relatives. The meaning of this derivative root is, logically enough: "To love."

This really bolsters my contention that freedom is God's ultimate value, the prime theme of Scripture and of His personality. With perhaps all too characteristic laziness and inattention, and even though I knew it was of utmost importance, I never did bother to study the roots of the word "free" -- friends, such as yourself, help one to progress!

"Free" is the first word listed under the root from which also derives "friend": "a. FREE, from Old English freo, free, and freon, freogan, to love, set free."

Humans aren't the only ones with the notion "to love, set free" -- it is close to our Father's heart as well. Here we see that freedom and love are incredibly intimately related themes. "To love" and "to set free": more or less the same! And from the roots of friend the concept comes: "lover, friend": they are more or less the same!

Your brother,
Jeffrey