**Should I be Friends with My Ex?**

**Kris Swiatocho, Cliff Young**

*EDITOR'S NOTE:* [*He Said-She Said*](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/singles/he-said-she-said/) *is a biweekly advice column for singles featuring a question from a Crosswalk.com reader with responses from a male and female point of view. If you've got a question about anything related to singleness or living the single life, please submit it to hesaid-shesaid@crosswalk.com (selected questions will be posted anonymously).*

QUESTION: Biblically speaking, is it ever ok to be friends with ex-lovers, or keep gifts, mementos, or pictures from past non-marital relationships, if you're headed toward [marriage](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/) with another person?

I met and love a young lady, who has kept up a verbal relationship with her most recent boyfriend (before me) for most of our relationship. She even stayed out till 4am once, where he was involved. She had another friend, with whom she had been sexually active, and wanted me to allow them to remain friends too. She realizes she made mistakes with these men in the past, and when I felt we were headed toward marriage, I asked her to remove any semblance of past relationships physically and from her heart – for my sake.

She has fought me on every side on this issue for years. I just saw a picture she still keeps that her ex took of her (she says she absolutely loves it because of vanity; because of the way her hair, nails and slim figure look in the photo). I reminded her of my request to remove any lingering items from past relationships; she refuses, but wants to compromise. I have just about had it... and I’m wondering your take on this situation now that you know my point of view.

I see her past relationships as inappropriate, and going forward, I really want us to have a blessed marriage but this is an obstacle to me. I believe it leaves a door open for Satan to work in our future. It could remind both of us of a past that, in my opinion should be forgotten.

What say you? Please be candid.

HE SAID:

If you’re looking for a biblical stance to corroborate your feelings that your girlfriend should not retain any past friendships with ex-lovers and friends, I can’t supply you with one. However, we can discern a general intent of biblical principles which speaks to your situation.

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* ([Matthew 6:21](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=mt+6:21-21)).

Whatever and whomever you tend to place the most emphasis on will be where your heart is.

Each of us have our personal “stumbling blocks” in the way of places we (used to) frequent, habits we have established, and friends we have made which can take us away our focus of following and serving God.

If your girlfriend is not willing to understand, compromise, or budge on some of her past (problematic) relationships, she may not be placing yours as high a priority as you do. From what you have shared, I sense your girlfriend wants to hang onto these people because of the history, comfort and enjoyment she finds in them, possibly at the risk of losing you.

She may not be ready in her heart to give it all up for you, and that is a choice she will have to make. There is nothing you can say, show or prove that will change her mind.

The most difficult part of a relationship is accepting the other person *as they are,* not as you would like them to be or even who you think they can become.

I also sense you may be suffering with some trust issues. If you are seriously heading towards marriage and can’t fully believe in her now, you may need to reevaluate your relationship.

*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres* ([1 Corinthians 13:6-7](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=1co+13:6-7)).

Relationships are give and take, never a one-sided proposition, and each must work together to find common ground and understanding.

A photo, gift or even a friend from the past has no bearing on a current relationship unless romantic value is placed on them. I don’t think it’s appropriate to have photos of past relationships on display, but trying to wipe out all of the past and reminders of any previous relationship may also rid a person of the positive lessons learned through those experiences and a part of who they are today.

Previous friendships can be maintained after marriage; however it takes boundaries and trust on all parties to make it work.

SHE SAID:

What a great question!

I think some of your girlfriend's answers display a growing maturity in her walk with the Lord. I know I too have pictures of past boyfriends, and even fiances, from my highschool, college and into my twenties and thirties. Even though some of these pictures were from times I was not following God (and neither were the men I was with), they are a part of who I am today. I have pictures of trips to Europe and various other vacation places and holidays that I would not be wiling to throw away either.

I think the issue here is the involvement of some of these men in her life *now* and perhaps what they still mean. If everyone from her past has also accepted Christ and were growing in the Lord, then those old memories would just be that. The pictures would not be a threat but instead a reminder of how God has changed us. But the fact that she still showcases them, talks and hangs out with these men, tells me she has not really moved from her past into the present (or future) with you. You are definitely experiencing red flags that God has revealed to you.

Even though I don't think it's critical that anyone should have to throw away every old picture, I do think there is a line drawn with what the picture looks like and what it represents. I love this scripture where Paul talks about moving forward in his own walk because he too had a past filled with sin, poor choices and separation from God. When we come to the Lord we are a new creation. We should want to move forward towards the goals God has for us including relationships. Relationships that he is leading.

*Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus* ([Philippians 3:13-14](http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?t=niv&q=php+3:13-14) NIV ).

*HE is … Cliff Young, a Crosswalk.com contributing writer and a veteran single of many decades. He has traveled the world in search of fresh experiences, serving opportunities, and the perfect woman (for him) and has found that his investments in God, career and youth ministry have paid off in priceless dividends.*

*SHE is ... Kris Swiatocho, the President and Director of* [*TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries*](http://thesinglesnetwork.org/) *and* [*FromHisHands.com Ministries.*](http://fromhishands.com/) *Kris has served in ministry in various capacities for the last 25 years. An accomplished trainer and mentor, Kris has a heart to reach and grow leaders so they will in turn reach and grow others. She is also the author of* [*three books.*](http://www.thesinglesnetwork.org/bookspdfs.html)

*DISCLAIMER: We are not trained psychologists or licensed professionals. We're just average folk who understand what it's like to live the solo life in the twenty-first century. We believe that the Bible is our go-to guide for answers to all of life's questions, and it's where we'll go for guidance when responding to your questions. Also, it's important to note that we write our answers separately.*