

Reflections on Unity in a Divided Time: Lessons from Charlie Kirk's Legacy

By Troy Dooly

Hey, folks—morning. Troy Dooly here. Over the last couple of weeks, we've all been through a whirlwind. It's been enlightening for some, polarizing for others, divisive in moments, and yet, for a few, it's sparked a sense of unity. I'm going to share a bit of a confession with you today, drawing from what I've observed and learned in the wake of Charlie Kirk's tragic death.

Before some of my Marine brothers sent me raw footage just prior to the news of the shooter going viral—the day Charlie was assassinated, executed, or however you choose to frame it—I barely knew who he was. I'd caught glimpses of him on TV shows and snippets online, but I wasn't a follower. Turning Point USA's focus on college-aged folks didn't align with my world, where I'm raising kids from 42 down to nine. But from that moment onward, I dove in. Between the tragedy and Sunday's celebration of life, I had time to familiarize myself with Charlie, his values, and what Turning Point stands for.

I listened to hours of his talks and even more from his wife, Erika Kirk—an amazing woman, grounded in her faith and roles as mom, wife, and business partner. What struck me about Charlie was that while I agreed with much of what he said, there were parts where, if I'd been advising him, I'd suggest rephrasing for inclusivity. "Hey, let's tone that down—it's more divisive than it needs to be. Let's start conversations without alienating folks." We all know some people resist unity no matter what, but Charlie's approach often aimed higher.

Then came the celebration of life. I'd just shot a video on Friday about what unites us as Americans—our common values. Watching six hours of coverage, flipping channels for different perspectives, validated research I've been digging into, building on work from experts in politics, education, economics, and religion. Through my lens, it boiled down to two worldviews playing out in real time.

On one side, there's the separatist or scarcity mindset—us versus them, limited resources, enemies everywhere. Stephen Miller exemplified this. As deputy chief of staff overseeing aspects of homeland security, he used his time at the podium not to honor Charlie or Turning Point, but to rally against "enemies." "We're coming after them; we're not backing down." It was raw, unfiltered, and in my opinion, inappropriate for a celebration of life. No religious angle—just stark division. I spotted soundbites ripe for exploitation, thinking, "This will be

used against your side.”

Other speakers seemed scripted, reciting Bible verses they might not have known well, holding partisan lines over patriotism. They were there for a purpose, but it felt forced.

Then there was the other worldview: connected, abundant—believing there’s enough for all, seeking common ground. Erika embodied this perfectly. Her message was rooted in forgiveness, not enmity. Despite every right to hate the person who took her husband, father to their kids, lover, and best friend, she drew from her deep faith in Jesus Christ. Not just words from a Bible or a pastor’s sermon, but a personal struggle she shared openly, pointing back to Jesus on the cross. “I forgive this young man.”

Her battle’s just beginning—guiding her children through bitterness without letting it divide them. It’s a reminder: unforgiveness hurts us and sows division.

Even President Trump showed vulnerability, perhaps for the first time. He’d slip into divisive rhetoric—“we’re coming after you”—echoing Miller, then pause: “Charlie used to get on me about that. Erika, keep working on me.” It was enlightening, acknowledging how his words, despite calls for unity, can divide.

As for me? I spent most of my life in scarcity mode—me against them, us versus authorities. Growing up in an outlaw family, serving in the military, it was ingrained. It’s taken decades of research, soul-searching, and building my relationship with Jesus to shift. When someone asked, “What kind of Christian are you?” I paused—over 60,000 Protestant denominations alone! But what stays true, what I saw in Erika and undergirding Charlie’s life, is a personal walk with Christ. Living by His rules: solitude, prayer, fasting, community. Whether in politics, religion, education, or business, we’ve defaulted to us-versus-them, blaming government, big business, pharma, or social media instead of taking responsibility.

We fear calling out specifics, so we generalize. But we need to draw lines, stop people-pleasing, and meet in the middle. John Maxwell, an early mentor, lives by the 101% rule: Find the 1% you agree on with someone and give it 100% effort. That sparks trust-inspired, purpose-driven dialogue. If we share common values—a better America for our families—how do we reach there together? That’s moderation: crossing aisles in politics, but applying it everywhere. If conservatives decry liberal lists, don’t make your own. If church-state separation means pastors can discuss politics, debate it openly—together.

We don’t need polarization. This American experiment, nearing 250 years, just

got a wake-up call. What do you have in common with your neighbor? If Jesus said love God fully and your neighbor as yourself—or even your enemies—maybe self-love or understanding their side is the start. We'll always disagree; utopia's a myth. But how we approach disagreements matters. Remember, the Constitution took a decade of compromise—imperfect, but we've inched toward equality over time.

Charlie Kirk's moment in history can entrench us like Miller, or heal like Erika: forgiveness, open dialogue. Think beyond your worldview. Seek full context, find agreement, give it everything. Start at home—build conversations there.

On Sunday, texting my 22-year-old son Jetty, I admitted confusion: "Why so much attention on Charlie when other tragedies—like kids shot in Colorado or a young lady in North Carolina—get overlooked?" He replied, "Dad, for my generation, this is our Martin Luther King moment." Another friend his age, more liberal, saw it differently. It echoed the assassinations of King and Malcolm X—what emerged from division.

Whether you liked Charlie or not, ask: How can I foster unity in my sphere? Find common ground in politics, religion, economics, business. We're Americans—we love this country, want better for our families, aim to leave it improved. Let's figure that out today.

Stay strong, stay focused. We'll talk more soon.