

Editorial: How I am processing recent violence

September 18, 2025

I'm going to talk about traumatizing things, and I'm going to challenge Christians to focus on who Jesus commands us to be. Our present moment demands it.

I returned from sabbatical this Monday. I didn't pay attention to the news during my weeks away. Why? Because a sabbatical means stepping away from work. News is my work.

And then ...

It was Wednesday afternoon last week. I'd just picked up my daughter and her friend from school. They were talking in the back seat. My daughter said Charlie Kirk was shot and killed. I went cold.

I know they were still talking. I heard some of it. I also somehow didn't hear any of it. [Charlie Kirk was shot and killed](#), and the implications and ramifications of that were loud in my mind.

Charlie Kirk was shot and killed at approximately 12:23 p.m. MDT, in Utah. Seconds before, he had fielded a question about gun violence.

At 12:30 p.m. MDT, in Colorado, a high school student shot two fellow students before shooting and killing himself.

Something you need to know: A [bill passed in the last Texas legislative session](#) “prohibiting the use of personal communication devices by students on school property during the school day.” Texas public schools implemented this new law on the first day of this school year.

My high school daughter and her friend didn’t know anything about the day’s events until school let out at 4:30 p.m. And immediately they knew everything everybody else knew. Not just about Charlie Kirk being killed. They also knew about the school shooting in Evergreen, Colo.

Evergreen. Such a happy name. Such horror.

And we’re supposed to take all of this in, without warning. We’re supposed to process all of this and know what to think and what to feel, right away. And we’re supposed to know immediately the right things to say ... and the things that must not be said.

We are struggling to process all of this. Yes, we. To think we can separate ourselves from the traumas and horrors of our time is to kid ourselves. We are barely treading the chaotic waters of societal anger, grief, despair. Rage, confusion, denial. Exhaustion.

Christian, though we be in these troubling waters, we must put our feet down on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, who holds us in the storm and guides us in the dark. We need this for ourselves and our society. It is also simple obedience to Christ.

But these things, these killings, this violence that just keeps happening. I’m deeply troubled by it all. You should be, too.

I'm deeply troubled we are the kind of society where some among us believe they must kill a person to quiet a person. Even in front of God and everybody.

I'm deeply troubled we are at a place in our society where we are so polarized we can't bear opposing viewpoints, where we shout down, cancel out, cut off, not the ideas, but the people who communicate them.

I'm deeply troubled we are the kind of society where our children are killing each other at school. Regularly.

I'm deeply troubled we are the kind of society where most of us know little to nothing about yet another school shooting. And if we know, it no longer stops us cold. If we know, we quickly forget or ignore it. One community doesn't have that luxury: Evergreen, Colo. Correction: An appalling number of communities don't have that luxury.

I'm deeply troubled Christians have allowed our societal sickness to infect us and our churches. In case we disagree, I hold up the example of countless pastors receiving blistering criticism this last Sunday for what they did or did not say about Charlie Kirk during their worship services. Regardless of what they said about Jesus.

Christian, is this really who we're going to be? This is certainly not who we *have* to be. And it's most definitely not who Jesus commands us to be.

To behave as the world behaves is to try to swim the swirling seas.

The reality is, we don't know as much about Desmond Holly as we know about Charlie Kirk. Holly was the 16-year-old who fired multiple shots inside Evergreen High School, seriously injuring two students before he died from a self-inflicted gunshot. Nor do we know those he injured.

Kirk was a prominent public figure and political force for more than a decade. Understandably, the public reaction to his murder has been proportionate to his prominence. But it's so much of what made him prominent that so many are struggling with.

The fact is, Charlie Kirk made incendiary statements about women, race, the LGBTQ community, the Second Amendment and other topics. Whether anyone agrees with those statements or not, they were incendiary. And divisive, made clear by the reactions to his murder.

Which is where we find ourselves now, fighting over our deeply divided, polarized responses to Charlie Kirk, struggling to come to grips with his murder.

Even we as Christians have strongly differing reactions. When we focus more on the chaotic waters than on our sure foundation, that single foundation we share, we give ourselves to the waves and hollow out the gospel.

It is right for us to mourn Charlie Kirk's murder. It is right to call it political violence, an assassination.

We also must mourn the murder this summer of Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband. This also was political violence, an assassination.

Not just because they were important political figures. But because they were created in the image of God and their murders an affront to our God.

It is right for us to mourn the school shooting in Evergreen and not to overlook it.

We also must mourn the Catholic school shooting exactly two weeks before in Minneapolis, and the other nine school shootings just this year.

Not just because these were children. Not just because schools are supposed to be safe places for our children. But because all of them were and are created in the image of God and their murders are an affront to our God.

Created. By God. In God's image.

It is to that scriptural position we, Christian, must return and from that position we, Christian, must begin again. It is from there—our being created in God's image, all of us—that we as Christians must engage our society now. It is from there we must navigate our differences, heal our wounds, proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I hear this in my head, but I'm still driving my daughter home, trying to get to shore.

Addressing trauma

The violence we encounter indirectly in our news—and that far too many people encounter directly—traumatizes us, whether we know it or not. In fact, the last several years have been a succession of personal and societal traumas to the point we may simply feel numb, itself a symptom of trauma.

Other symptoms of trauma include withdrawal, confusion, anxiety, irritability, fear, overreacting, aggression, lashing out, sadness or depression, feelings of isolation or disconnection.

If you are experiencing any of these—especially if any of these symptoms are interfering with your sleep, relationships, work or other areas of life—I encourage you to reach out to someone else for help, specifically a counselor with training and experience in treating trauma. You don't have

to simply endure it or face it alone.

One of God's good gifts is the calling and equipping of counselors to help us when we need it. It may take you a while and several tries to find a counselor who is a good fit for you. That's OK, and it's normal. Don't give up.

One place you might start is [this worksheet](#) (linked by permission) from *Crisis Counseling: A Guide for Pastors and Professionals* by Scott Floyd, a specialist in trauma and director of the Master of Arts in Counseling program at East Texas Baptist University. He also directed the counseling program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and then B.H. Carroll Theological Seminary.

Eric Black is the executive director, publisher and editor of the Baptist Standard. He can be reached at eric.black@baptiststandard.com. The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the author.