



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Charlie Kirk: America at a Turning Point – Part 1

Guest(s): Charlie Kirk

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone, I'm James Dobson, and you're listening to Family Talk, which is a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. And I want to tell you that I am really excited to have Charlie Kirk as our guest on the program today. Most of you have seen or heard him on Fox News and elsewhere on the media, but there is so much more to this remarkable young man. He was named by Forbes Magazine to its prestigious 30 Under 30 list, and he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Liberty University for his exceptional leadership and outspoken conservative voice. He's the founder of Turning Point USA, which I want him to talk about in a moment. Charlie is one of the most influential members of his generation. Charlie, welcome to Family Talk.

Charlie Kirk: It is a great honor, Dr. Dobson. I grew up watching you and watching this program. You've had a great influence on my life, and it is a phenomenal honor to be here, so thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank you, Charlie. You grew up in a Christian home, didn't you?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. And as I grew older, the idea of accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior became more and more real. I mean, it means more to me today than it even did two years ago, the more I read and the more Scriptures I pour into. But yes, my mother actually read many of your books. It's funny, Dr. Dobson, also, when I started driving in the Chicagoland area, I'd always listen to Moody Radio, and you would be a frequent guest or frequently cited on Moody Radio. And so you played a very big impact on my life and still do.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank you for those kind comments. Charlie, you have grown to prominence at a very young age. How did that come about?

Charlie Kirk: Well, I appreciate the compliment. I decided when I was 18 not to go to college. I was going to go to the United States Military Academy at West Point, ended up not getting in and it was the best thing that never happened to me. It's almost as if God had a different plan. And I love to read, I really enjoy history and I felt like we were in a crisis in our culture. I felt when I was 18 years old as I feel today, that our generation has to do something dramatic and sizeable to really spread the ideas of, of course, the gospel, also harmonizing those with first principles, and of the Constitution and freedom of speech and dialogue. And I

was afraid back when I was 18, and I share this fear today, that our failure to do that will be the disintegration of our country in a direction that I would not be comfortable with. And so I believe that our generation can really be one that rises around biblical principles, that reasserts them in our culture, and that's what we're fighting for every single day.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I've heard a little of your background, Charlie, and it's really interesting to see the path that you have walked. You were an Eagle Scout, you were a very good student, you made good grades in school and you're scary intelligent. How did you make the decision not to go to college?

Charlie Kirk: I didn't come at it lightly, I'll tell you that. And I wish I could say that when I made the decision I had as much confidence as I do today talking about it. It was more just a sequence of events. Not getting into West Point ended up being a decision point for me. And so then I just said I'm going to take a gap year. For your listeners, I recommend gap years. I think they could be very, very helpful, especially for young men.

Dr. James Dobson: That means laying out a year before you went to college.

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. That's right. So 9 to 12 months just to get your life organized. And I took that gap year as an opportunity to start Turning Point USA. Now, mind you, I had no money, no connections, and no idea what I was doing, but I had energy and I knew what I believed and just went on that path. And to my great surprise, it really started to grow and started to work. And there was a couple of tough years at the beginning where people really doubted us, doubted me and doubted what we were doing, but I had phenomenal people along the way, one of which, Bill Montgomery.

Dr. James Dobson: I want you to talk about him. He was a mentor to you, wasn't he?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And he told you not to go to college?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. He just passed away at 80 years old. But at 72 he came up to me when I was an 18-year-old, and he said, "Charlie, there's something about the way you speak and the way you communicate, I think you shouldn't go to college and I think that you should go start a youth organization to help save the country." And he was the one that drove me to events all across the Midwest. 72-year-old helping an 18-year-old. It's just so poetic in some sense. And he mentored me and he poured into me. And while everyone was just this barrage of negativity, he was relentlessly positive and optimistic and he said, "Charlie, you can achieve it." He poured into me, and I think that's such an important lesson for people. There are young people out there, young leaders, that are in need of mentorship.

And it was one 72-year-old who loved his country, who loved God, who poured into me. And both of us are here because of that intergenerational mentorship. And I think that's something we always have to communicate, that maybe that could be you, maybe you could pour into that next person that needs it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Tell me about Turning Point USA. It's interesting, having not gone to college, that you're on some 2,000 campuses regularly and you speak on university campuses and colleges. How does that work?

Charlie Kirk: It's probably one of the most ironic parts of my life, Doctor, that the kid who doesn't go to college actually runs a college organization. We are now present on over 2,000 high school and college campuses across the country, we are reaching tens of millions of people on digital and social media. And the whole premise of our organization is that we have been given a gift. Our generation has been given a gift through decades and a couple of centuries of sacrifice and deliberate planning to build a phenomenal civilization. One built on biblical principles, on first principles, one that allows dialogue and free expression and religious liberty. And now it's our generation that is receiving this gift. What are we going to do with it?

Are we going to say that we live in an awful place and we should get rid of everything that preceded us? Are we going to understand our complex yet heroic history and communicate it to our generation? I prefer of course that option. And so that's what we talk about every day at Turning Point USA. The idea of a turning point is that we are at a moment in time where we're going to go one way or the other. Either we will be thankful that we live in America, thankful to God that he gave us this gift, or we're going to be angry that we live in America, which is really where the majority of the left-wing energy is focused, is just an ingratitude and bitterness that they live in this country.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. You have expressed great concern about the indoctrination of students that's taking place on university campuses. They're taught to be bitter, they're taught to hate America, they're taught to despise democracy, and they're turned into angry leftists by the tens of thousands on university campuses. Does seeing this take place cause you great concern?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. And I'm trying to communicate this to the biggest audience I can, which is these college campuses are no longer places of Socratic dialogue, they aren't. They've become indoctrination factories and almost places that produce activists, not enlightened minds. Young people always are going to determine where the country is headed. It's pretty obvious, but we need to articulate it. And when you have the places that are supposed to be about higher learning, around the pursuit of truth and knowledge, their output are people that are less thankful for the country that they were raised in. We should just have a pause and concern and say, "What are we exactly doing here? Is this helpful for the Republic? Is this going to be beneficial to what we're trying to achieve?" What we have been able to do at Turning Point is be able to persuade hundreds of

thousands, if not millions of people, to re-embrace first principles to understand the country that they live in and have respect for it.

And then also be able to defend and contest for that truth in the public arena because so many young people feel persecuted and they are afraid to speak out, and we are able to give them hopefully, God willing, courage and conviction to be able to speak truth.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you find that they're open to the Judeo-Christian conservative perspective if you have a chance to articulate it to them?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, sir. And this is what's really interesting. One of my favorite parts of Paul's letters is Galatians 3. And in a lot of ways, Galatians 3 is what we're doing at Turning Point, which is that the law can be a school teacher. So what do I mean by that? When I present to a younger audience, an organized way of thinking of a government that protects rights that were given to you naturally, amazing amount of times, Doctor, these students will say, "Well, who gives us those rights?" Well, God does and God is real. And it's incredible because what they have been dwelling in over the last 10 years of their life, let me just take a typical 20-year-old at a certain university, the predominant culture, if they went to public school, and in mass media, is one of secular humanism and indulgence culture. Multiply that with digital social media, they actually end up being very directionless and miserable by the time they become 20 years old. And part of that is because colleges are not teaching absolute truth.

Instead, they say that you have your own truth as a young person. It's this post-modernist idea that spread like wildfire in the 1960s and 70s, which was pioneered by a French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, who basically said everyone has their own version of truth. Well, you play that out in a culture, all of a sudden you have 20 and 21-year-olds that actually they themselves have never been able to find any sort of content answer to that. And they're looking for that absolute truth. You see, we can never remove people's yearning for meaning, and they're going to replace that meaning sometimes with very destructive forces. So I want convey to your audience that we are on, and I believe, the beginning stages of, God willing, another American revival and awakening. I really believe that, I see it on the college campuses, and I'm unafraid to talk about the intersection of first principles in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there are more people warming up to that message than the media would ever lead you to believe.

When I fill up a lecture hall, when I go and speak at Colorado State University, for example, or when I went to go speak at Florida State University in early March before all the shutdowns, they might have 100 protestors outside and police are escorting me, but there's 2,000 people in the room. And there's not one of them, maybe one or two that might want to cause a commotion, but almost all of them are there listening intently. They are seeking truth because that actually might be the only 90 minutes of their experience in Tallahassee at Florida State University where they will hear what I have to say. So there is an

appetite, there's a curiosity for this. And here's one lesson that I learned, Dr. Dobson, be less concerned about winning the audience right then and there, and be more concerned about communicating truth compassionately and lovingly.

Now, why is that? If I establish truth and don't waiver from it, that is going to make an impact at every single person in that room. See, if I pander and I try to hedge, I don't do anyone a service by that at all. But I can tell you, there are more people that support what I talk about on these college campuses than anyone would lead you to believe. I believe the activists, they are growing in volume, they're getting louder, but they're decreasing in number on the left. And I see a major opening for our value system to continue to spread and to flourish.

Dr. James Dobson: It must be a thrill for you to see these kids who have been so brainwashed and yet they're still open to the truth, if you're able to talk to them. Who is inviting you to come and speak through Turning Point USA?

Charlie Kirk: So a lot of these are Turning Point chapters that we have been able to start on these campuses. And to your point that you just mentioned, I truly believe I've been blessed one of the greatest jobs on the planet. I get to say what I believe, not care if I get retaliation, and then be able to see it make an impact in people's lives. I mean, I can't think of a better job. When I get to talk to somebody and a month later they'll send me an email on my podcast, they'll say, "Charlie, I used to be a liberal that was an atheist. And five or six things you said helped lead me on the path to being a Christ follower, a church attender, and a patriotic American." I'm like, "Wow." So praise God.

Dr. James Dobson: I've heard you say that in talking to students you find especially that young men are in a crisis of identity. They don't know what they believe, they don't know where they're going, they sometimes are just downright lost.

Charlie Kirk: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say to them?

Charlie Kirk: There's a crisis with masculinity in our country and we're not supposed to talk about it. When I go to a college campus, and I mentioned this, it almost gets more backlash from the administration or from the, let's just say, activist class there than anything else. But there is a crisis of masculinity with young men in America, and it's a crisis of responsibility. We have told our young men, while they were 13, 14, and 15, that you shouldn't ever have to be responsible to anyone or to actually be able to shoulder a burden, or someone might have to count on you. Instead, go indulge yourself and go pursue some sort of what they would call freedom. But it really isn't freedom, Doctor, it isn't. I don't like using that word because it's actually the opposite of the meaning. But for lack of a better term, that's basically what it is. And what ends up happening is these

young men enter college and they have been completely and totally emasculated. They have very little to any direction, no aim at all, whatsoever.

And they are looking for a place of meaning, and they haven't found it in the endless drinking parties or in the late-night sessions where they are watching programming that they know is bad for them. So what I'm able to say, and this is a message that resonates is why don't you right now straighten yourself out a little bit, get your aim right, and go shoulder a burden that challenges you? You see, young men in particular, young women are different, they're going through a separate crisis, I think it pales in comparison with the masculinity crisis, I really do, because we have hyper-feminized our country, we have. And we need to recognize that. Because with young men, they want to be challenged, they want to be spoken to honestly, they want to be pushed to that next level. They're tired of being put into the back of the class and not being taken seriously.

These young men want to be treated as if they want to go on the hero's journey, Doctor. So that's the message I convey, and I think we need to be very serious about what happens when you start to lose strong, confident, courageous men. Your society will deteriorate.

Dr. James Dobson: Man, just think of what the impact of that confusion is on the family. With young women marrying a guy who doesn't know who he is or where he's going, he can't lead because he doesn't know what direction he's headed.

Charlie Kirk: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, that undermines the entire basis for marriage and the family, doesn't it?

Charlie Kirk: Completely. So what ends up happening, Doctor, is these women are actually forced to then play the masculine role. And so I'm going to be very careful the way I describe this, but it's just true, is that generally women do not want to play that masculine role. They don't. It's not the way God made them. In fact, they have been put through a campus culture that they very well might be able to pursue professional success, which many women do, and they do so quite well. But there comes a time where many women, I'm talking about 95% plus, do want to marry and they want to have children. This is biologically proven. And so what ends up happening is they marry very weak men, which ends up creating miserable marriages. It happens time and time again.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, when you talk like this to guys, do they grab it? Do they hold it? Do they say "tell me more about how to do this?"

Charlie Kirk: Yes, and quite honestly, the more direct I am with them, the better. And as soon as I start talking about responsibility, they start to get up a little bit. They start to say, "What? There's something more than just endlessly being on my phone looking at nonsense all day long? There's something where I can really play a part here?" They're yearning for this message, Doctor, and I think that it's

biblical. If we pair this with biblical truth, I'm very optimistic about it. And of course the feminists, they find huge exception with what I'm saying, and it really doesn't concern me honestly. But they're obviously critics of this viewpoint.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you ever recommend to parents that they tell their kids it's okay not to go to college?

Charlie Kirk: Yes, I do. And this is an uncomfortable conversation because we are, in some ways, still looking at college through a two-decade old lens. I do go as bold to say, I think we have too many people going to college in our country. The national graduation rate is 59%. The New York Federal Reserve came out and said that 44% of recent college graduates are employed in jobs that don't require a college degree. Also, we look at student loan debt being a major cost driver to middle-income families and their inability to continue to build wealth and continue to improve their socioeconomic status. And so I just think we need to have a pause on what exactly higher education is, and why do we send students there. And it's a tough conversation, but it's one that I think that some families make a mistake by pushing their students to borrow money they do not have, to study things that quite honestly do not matter, to find jobs that do not exist.

Dr. James Dobson: Charlie, I came out of a very different background, a different experience, because I was from a different generation. What you described as being characteristic of what happens on campuses today is radically different than what I went through. I'm a product, first of all, of a Christian college, Pasadena College, which is now called Point Loma, and those professors laid a foundation for me for everything that was to come. They strengthened my faith, they were giving me a general overview of science and literature and the arts and the scientific method, and especially composition. They taught me to write. And it has really contributed so much to who I am today. And I went straight from there, undergraduate work, into USC Graduate School, and then later directly from a PhD into the medical school and I became a professor of pediatrics.

I have no complaints at all about my educational background. I had some wonderful professors, and I had an incredible foundation. It's a shame that young people today are not exposed to that kind of training. Charlie, the greatest impact that college made on me was the privilege of rubbing shoulders with professors who towered over me intellectually and who had vastly greater experience than I did. And they were modeling for me even when they didn't know it, and I adopted their way of thinking, and so much of that made an impact on me. That apparently does not occur as often today, does it?

Charlie Kirk: You're exactly right. And it happens at a couple of schools. It happens at Liberty University or Hillsdale, and there's some other good schools across the country as well, but they're very few. The opposite actually happens now in college, where you don't actually have a true liberal arts education, where they are removing the classics of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, where they call the Bible a foolish fable document that shouldn't even be discussed at all. It's the greatest

book ever to exist in the history of the world. There is no liberal arts education without at least having an awareness of the biblical text and the impact that it has had on human civilization, especially our own.

And also, you were exposed to different ideas. Or if you disagreed, you were embraced, you were actually allowed a platform. It does not exist now on college campuses at all. Or if you have a biblical worldview, or if you hold a free market, capitalistic bend on economics, or if you believe in the founding of our country, it's not that you are told that you're wrong, it's you're told the shut up. It's a very big difference. And I agree with you completely, Doctor, I am a huge advocate of learning and the pursuit of truth. I only wish our colleges were doing that. And so I think that we need to strip ourselves of our previous biases of higher education and be honest with what it has become, which unfortunately are places where, quite honestly, it's a very dangerous triad, Doctor, of bitterness, resentment and arrogance. Boy, you combine those three, that's what we're living through right now.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to talk to you a little more next time about where we are as a country, the socialistic bent that we are experimenting with now and what all that means. Let's close this program by saying again what Turning Point USA is. How can they get in touch with you and what is the range of services that you provide?

Charlie Kirk: At Turning Point USA, we operate high school and college chapters all across the country. Anyone listening can go to tpusa.com. Get your young people involved, get your grandkids involved. We have energetic, positive, optimistic young people that want to play a role in saving this beautiful gift that we have been given, that protects natural rights, that understands first principles and is willing to do something about it. It's tpusa.com, and it's been a great blessing to share a little bit of about what we're doing with you.

Dr. James Dobson: And how are you funded?

Charlie Kirk: We're funded through grassroots donors from all across the country. We have over 70,000 grassroots donors that go to tpusa.com, that chip in. We also have some very generous people that have helped us along the way, but we are blessed by just small dollar donations that come in from all across the country at tpusa.com.

Dr. James Dobson: Charlie, it is so inspirational for me to talk to you to see what's going on in your world because the things you've said are the things I believe. There's a whole lot more there that we want to talk about next time because our country is in trouble, deeply in trouble, and I want to get your take on that. Stay right where you are, and we will record another program and let our listeners hear it next time. So thank you for being with us today. I've enjoyed what you had to say. Let's give it another whirl.

Charlie Kirk: Thank you, Doctor.

Roger Marsh: A very timely and relevant conversation about the social and political condition of our country here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today Dr. Dobson's guest has been Charlie Kirk, founder of Turning Point USA. Visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org to learn more about Charlie and his thriving organization. By the way, if you didn't hear this entire interview, there are numerous ways you can catch up. Listen through drjamesdobson.org, also on your Amazon Alexa or through the podcast app on your smartphone. You can also request a CD copy of this program as well. You'll find all this information when you go to drjamesdobson.org, and then click on the broadcast tab at the top of the page. Be sure to tune in again for part two of Dr. Dobson's interview with Charlie Kirk coming up on tomorrow's broadcast. They'll be discussing the ongoing closures of America's churches and why so many people are supporting socialist ideals. That's all coming up on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Hope you'll join us then.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi, this is Dr. Tim Clinton for the James Dobson Family Institute. Are you leaving a lasting and godly legacy? When you think about your family, after you're gone, are you worried about them or are you confident they'll hold on to what you've taught them? At the Dobson Family Institute, we're committed to helping you understand the importance of passing on your faith, not only to your children, but to your children's children too. Check out drjamesdobson.org today for helpful hints, tips, and advice to help make this happen. Remember this, your legacy matters. Don't waste it.