



The Juicy Fruit of Patience:
A Conversation with Troy Bronsink
March 14, 2024



Transcript

Sara Hayden: Troy, can you say a little bit about why it's difficult to do both things in conventional religious spaces?

Troy Bronsink: Yeah, good question.

Sara: Is it because it's not said? Is it because we're not explicit in the forms in which we shape are not dialogical? You know, it's like you may have one person speaking to a group of people who listen and then they shake hands and pass the piece. (laughs)

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Sara: Or, you know, it's better done with that kind of invitation people simply to be aware that, that is the one of the primary purposes and opportunities. And we get confused ...

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... of like, maybe that isn't the primary thing.

Troy: It's a good question. And I guess maybe what I appreciate about the question, it asks me to back off a little bit, a little less of kind of Young Turk, bull in a china shop language from back ...

Sara: (laughs)

Troy: ... when the three of us all knew each other. I do think it happens. Maybe a way to say it is like both directions, inner transformation, and collective change are vulnerable.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: I was gonna say they're kinda clumsy or embarrassing. You move into an unknown space and you ask a question you don't know the answer to.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: In my experience, I think culturally we're shaping people in the direction of self-help, self-recovery.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: And so, they go and seek out, as a consumer, they seek out a place that's gonna quickly on ramp that for them.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Or they might look for a place of external reformation and change, transformation, and they wanna join that group. It's almost like in the market, the messaging is really difficult.

Sara: Yeah. Well, you write in The Hives website. These words, "We have a hunch that small groups make it easier to learn mindful and contemplative practices, not only easier, but more meaningful."

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Sara: Then I was thinking, "Well, what's the easier than what?" And what I was thinking was, oftentimes, we think of and practice contemplative rituals or postures solo by ourselves. And it'd be like, "Oh, contemplation is sometimes part and parcel with solitude."

Troy: Beautiful.

Sara: That you're saying there's this opportunity that you intentionally designed of folks who are open, but also seeking that collective liberation. They're seeking to practice vulnerability. It's not easy to get there. And I hope the whole world gets there. (laughs)

Troy: Yeah. (laughs)

Sara: And there are early adopters, shall we say (laughs) ...

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: ... in our context, in every context of folks who are like, "This is the step I'm at now. I wanna do this with other people." And that's going to be even better, experiencing. I love the way you talk about the eternal presence, having experienced that love and offering the vulnerability and the seeking. It gives me that returning. I can return to myself. And then having returned to myself, I can arrive as myself and share that with others, and let them arrive as themselves.

Troy: Yeah, this is really a callback, I think, to your first question about the world.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: And then that kind of follow up around, are we always meeting each other in a constant state of trauma?

Sara: Mm-hmm. You use the phrase stuck buffering, which I found super ...

Troy: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Sara: What is buffering technologically?

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: You're not really connecting. You see each other, but it's like ... Right?

Troy: That's right. That's right.

Sara: Yeah. Like you just buffered literally.

Troy: (laughs)

Sara: Like our internet connection just buffered on the podcast. And I heard the words delayed, but I was so distracted by the distortion that I got into my head.

Troy: That's it.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: That's it. So, here's where the birthright is, I think. Not only do we have this beautiful inheritance of what we would call trauma responses, these fear, or anxiety, or desire responses, but placed within us all is a direct relationship with infinite love. Giving itself away is my very life. And to trust that is to create a little distance between the clinging or the overwhelm of these other responses. So, in terms of a phone, it's like my phone battery is recharged, I've got some space on my phone so that I can use different apps. If you think of it in terms of technology, like ...

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: ... the body is, can naturally do this, and we know what that's like to live. I mean, what's Peterson's translation of Matthew 13, to walk freely and lightly.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: The unforced rhythms of grace. We know that. We have experienced it in our most childlike hour. We've experienced it at that time when we look into a newborn baby's eyes, when I've been with my wife's grandfather at the end of his journey, and something changes in his eyes. We've experienced that.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: So, that is a personal, yes, personal birthright, but it doesn't stop there. We're designed for connection with one another. And so, when I'm not operating so many apps in the background and my battery is low, I can actually connect to another phone. My computer can connect to your computer. We can actually experience a direct type of connection. That's not just data. It actually is the material name for what's happening between me and you, which in our lineage, Paul described as "fruit".

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: There's something physically happening when patience happens between us.

Sara: Hmm. Patience happens between us.

Troy: Or love and kindness, or joy.

Sara: Joy. Are you ...

Troy: Yeah, um ...

Sara: You're literally thinking of the fruit of the Spirit.

Troy: The fruit of the Spirit. I wouldn't say it's an exhaustive list. It's just a great list though. It's a great list of what is it that happens. When-

Sara: It is. So, we know those emotions. Yeah.

Troy: Yes. And those emotions don't happen in isolation.

Sara: Hmm.

Troy: They're a communal inheritance. And so, many times we settle for working with buffering. And so, we're getting underdeveloped apples, and bananas, and oranges.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Or underdeveloped, less nutritious ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... and perhaps less tasty love, and patience, and goodness, and temperance, and all these things that can be exchanged between us. Thomas Hübl, who's been really helpful with a lot of this work for me. He has a lot of writing on collective trauma healing. He describes this as

attunement. And he would use the image of like a tuning fork. When you pull another tuning fork next to it, it starts to ring.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: That actually, that's the natural capacity. That's not a strange phenomenon. That's not supernatural. That actually is connection. That's attachment. That is what's happening. And that's what breaks in that trauma experience is for a moment I don't experience that.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: So, it's not just what was done to me, but what- what was done to me, did to me, which meant ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... I'm not experiencing attunement. And so, there's a longing, and something jumps in to try to protect that as a shortcut. And so, yes, if we are moving with those shortcuts around one another, we're actually missing the deep birthright of community.

Sara: Wow.

Troy: Which is the source of justice. Justice is born from beloved community. It's not created from the top down through mandates.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Peace arises. Peace isn't coerced from outside.

Sara: A few moments ago, you evoked the word patience, that we are patient with each other.

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: I'm curious why we don't practice patience in our relationships. Maybe a particular example of when we, as human beings, maybe between family members, or neighbors, or strangers where it's like the anger surfaces, the frustration with one another. There's just so many layers upon the inner knowledge that human beings possess from trauma experience on a global or regional scale to the little tiny things that when we finally erupt, it's not over genocide. It's over ...

Troy: (laughs)

Sara: Uh ...

Troy: Pumps of vanilla in my latte. (laughs)

Sara: Exactly. (laughs) Exactly.

Troy: (laughs)

Sara: You know, I paid \$3.99, but you know, the injustice. It's interesting, right? I mean ...

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: It's in our bodies and it's why that returning. It has to be intentionally accessed or welcomed.

Troy: Yeah. There's a couple of things that come to mind. I'll knock a couple of them out real shortly and then ...

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: ... dig into one. One is kind of a way of reading a culture that's caught in a fond response with ... And some of the work right now, we'd call that like white supremacist thinking.

Sara: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Troy: So there, you have efficiency and urgency that folks agree to in order to get access to power.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: And so, in a sense, I can't be patient with you because it's going to cost my access to power. So, your question about it, why don't we have patience ...

Sara: In our relationships.

Troy: In our relationships.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Or another way to say is, "Why haven't I lately tasted the juicy fruit of patience?"

Sara: (laughs)

Troy: "Because I was in an attuned space with another person."

Sara: Okay.

Troy: "Why don't I experience that?" So, one is a cultural legacy burden of efficiency and urgency. But I would also say that sometimes it takes commitments in order to give someone the grace to move at the speed of trust. So, moving at the speed of trust is a type of patience.

Sara: Okay.

Troy: To trust each other, but that means somewhere you've tapped into, we'll just call it the whole field of nonviolent communication. Somewhere, you've tapped into being able to say, "This is what I want in experience. Can you give that to me?" And in that exchange, now we know that there's been a yes between you, so that creates the conditions for patients to arise.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Those conditions were not present when SNCC was doing lunch counter.

Sara: Students. Yeah.

Troy: Student Nonviolent Action Committee. Like they were actually pointing out that they aren't present. So, they were doing what should have been okay, but there was no speed of trust, and so then violence comes in.

At one of the churches I work with, there's a team there that we've begun to already ask, "How do you respond to fear, and how do you see that affecting our team's work?"

Sara: Are you asking them on a personal level?

Troy: I ask them to journal about it, and then we talk about it as a session. And then we moved from that to say, "Then what do you need from one another ..."

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: "... in order to not move into that reaction du jour?"

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: So, one of the members of this team is a highly effective, fast moving person, and also fiery personality. And so, most recently, there was a time where she had a fiery reaction. And because the room had built the conditions for, we'll say patience, but the conditions for trust ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... she was able to first catch it and reflect and go, "I guess I'm just doing my thing right now, aren't I?"

Sara: Mm-hmm. This is my fear out loud. Yeah.

Troy: Yeah. She might as well have said, "I'm in a fight flight response."

Sara: Wow.

Troy: But she didn't say that. She just said, "I don't know. I just, sometimes I just do this." So, that awareness is huge, but here's ...

Sara: Wow.

Troy: ... the jam is the moment when the connection took place and somebody else in this session at the church was able to say, "Yeah, you probably are ..."

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: "... but that's okay."

Sara: Wow.

Troy: And I could say as facilitator, but anybody in the group had permission to say, "Why don't we just pause for a second? Give her some space."

Sara: Yes.

Sara: That's one of those "small is all" moments, right?

Troy: Yeah. It's the whole thing, and it's-

Sara: That's the whole thing.

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: If that's all you do ...

Troy: Yeah. (laughs)

Sara: ... (laughs) it will reverberate. But if you don't do it, we just keep returning. I mean, trauma is cyclical, right?

Troy: Yeah.

Sara: The trauma response will reoccur.

Troy: That's right.

Sara: It will not go away.

Troy: What's not transformed gets transmitted.

Sara: Yes, but we can return.

Troy: The place where that takes my mind when it comes to theology is this was what was so compelling about Christ's presence exchanged between people to the effect that Paul would go, "There is a body." This is actually, uh, inter-organism experience, distinctive things moving together.

And in my experience, I'm comfortable with saying, "Paul is talking there about the human experience on the Earth." Not only does Christ have no body but ours, but like this Earth as God's expression of God's self in the world is also has a self-healing capacity.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: When we allow the wound to do its work, when we can hold the trusting container for that healing to take place. And I'll just say that this was one other instance. I was co-facilitating with a dear friend who's a Black woman therapist. There were three of us actually facilitating a course, and there was a time where she began to ask a direct question of one of the participants in the course, and something in me, a part of me got uncomfortable about the way she was talking directly. And I made a statement. She's given me permission to tell the story.

Sara: Uh-huh.

Troy: But I made a statement where I said, "Well ..." I won't say her name, but we'll just say it's Anna. "We don't always do what Anna says. Like, you can have a pass if you want it."

Sara: Oh.

Troy: Is what I meant to say.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: And this dear friend of mine said afterwards, "WTF, like, you just cut my feet right from underneath." What was that about?

Sara: We don't have to do what?

Troy: What the Black woman in the room said, and that's how it was experienced, right?

Sara: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Troy: And I had another reason I was saying that, but it doesn't change that our experiences are creating that and defending why I said it wouldn't have been of any help. And so ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... that meant then we could talk further about it. And we already had two years of really deep work together under our belt. And a couple nights, we would catch up to talk about it. And at a certain point, we got clear of it and we were able to get back into a co-creative trusting relationship.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: The trust hadn't gone away, but like the poisoned ground had gotten clean.

Sara: Wow.

Troy: And she said, "Thank you for being a relationship that's worth repairing." And that's the clue here I think is in this flock, fight, fawn, freeze responses that we're all in, it takes an extra step of connection to go, "Am I in relationships that are worth repairing? Am I communicating clearly with them so that they can repair?"

Sara: Wow.

Troy: And sometimes, that means I'm not and I need to find new relationships or I need to take a new step. But the birthright of community is to choose repair. And we have those natural gifts already placed within us. So, it's not that dismal for me.

Sara: (laughs)

Troy: It's more that we've added a lot more dashboard buttons to recognize how often we are buffering and not fully aligned and at home ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... and experiencing what Nicodemus was so thirsty for.

Sara: Wow. What a great example to reflect on in this time. So, today, uh, as we record, this is significant day, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. It's also Valentine's Day. And it's also Palentine's Day in our culture, a chance to embrace and celebrate these beautiful relationships

we have with those around us. And in what I take from your conversation and the returning piece, those relationships I feel so deeply grateful for are the ones in which we have practiced this patience where ...

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... we're tuned into one another and there's a vibration and a returning to oneself where I do really sense that me and this person or me and these people are free to weep together, to laugh ...

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Sara: ... together, to share and practice vulnerability together. And I know for many of us, there are relationships where the friendship feels dysfunctional, maybe one-sided. And I'm curious what insights you might offer into the situation when one of us feels either we're the dysfunctional one or the one who thinks, "I think I'm okay ..."

Troy: Yep.

Sara: "... but I think this relationship is not okay."

Troy: Yeah. To play back to what I hear you saying is that some folks might be in a, not just simply in a constant activated. We'll just say trauma response, but part of that response places a requirement on us.

Sara: Oh, well said.

Troy: There's one sure fire next step. I mean, not everything works all the time, but, uh, this one has been really helpful for me. And then there's a second option ...

Sara: Great.

Troy: ... after the first one. So, the first thing I think that fits. If you're aware ... Oh, this person is coming to me in an activated state. My wife is a speech language pathologist working in special education settings. This is the nature of their job.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: All day long, they're going to come across someone that is going to be in a legitimate, activated response. And so, the trauma informed response, it's easy to remember, is reflect, honor, connect. We're gonna have everybody on the podcast say it together with me. Reflect.

Sara: Reflect. Honor.

Troy: Honor. Connect.

Sara: Connect.

Troy: And it looks like this. When someone is activated, if you're able to be grounded and go, "Oh, I just noticed they're activated."

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: This is my child. This is my life partner. This could be a stranger at the United Dairy Farmers down the street. If I recognize it, I can reflect back to them. I hear you saying, and you can even reflect back what you're noticing. I noticed you're talking fast, I noticed that you're hot, like it's angry.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: I hear you saying this. So, the reflection is very much the I statement. I hear it, but then I'm reflecting back to you. You're bearing witness to their situation.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Reflect. Honor is ... And this is why it's helpful for yourself to be grounded. I mean, a lot of pastors are in this situation. Somebody comes in an activated state.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Can I reflect back, but then can I honor? And that's a real check in with yourself. Can I actually say that I do not need to invade this person by coercing them in a direction or abandon them? I can simply bear witness. And so, the honor is, I can only imagine there's a lot behind that.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Maybe it's even like that gives me some food for thought.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Or man, I can-, that really touches my heart. I can see this is really important to you. You can see why sometimes in emotional intelligence training we have some lines that are like that.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: But if you use them this way, you start with reflecting back what they say, and then honoring it ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... and then connect. That goes back to what we talked about the whole time. There's awareness and connection. What are the connecting points of resilience that you can point this person toward? Here's a community. Are you getting rest? What's your practice like? We do this in coaching. Who's somebody you can invite into this with you?

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: At some point, you're pointing them to connection. Sometimes, in church settings, that can be just resources like, "This is great you're here, and I think you're going to find some great people here." And maybe you would seek out Julie 'cause she's gonna be really good for this, but the connection is simply a pointing them towards a tool for resilience. It doesn't have to center you. As a founder and pastor, you have to deal a little bit with the messiah complex of like, "If I don't save this person in this moment, will they be okay?"

Sara: Oh, yeah.

Troy: Yeah. You're already actively doing that. Practicing that fact.

Sara: That's why I came here. Yeah.

Troy: Yeah. And so, then that's one piece that may be as far as you can get with a person to reflect ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ... honor, and connect.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: If this is a relationship in which you have agreements, which I think is like a next level relationship, you're in association with people. John McKnight describes ...

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: ... small groups, associations, and institutions. Once you get to the association level, we're on a team together, I'm married to you. (laughs)

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: You're a neighbor and we're going to have to work this out.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: Then you can move to another deeper model, which Marshall Rosenberg describes as nonviolent communication. And it's similar, but it's more direct because it's calling forth their agreement. And nonviolent communication has four steps to it. You should look it up, folks that are on the podcast and see this, but I'll just tell them to you in a sentence structure.

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: First, you observe what is happening. So, with an I statement. I realize you have been calling me every day at this time. Then you say a feeling. It creates in me ... I statement, it's not about you.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: That creates in me a disruption because this is usually when I pick up my kids, or this is ... It creates in me some anger because I feel like you haven't heard what I said before, whatever that is. So, it's a observation, a feeling, and then a need, and this is what we often miss.

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: What I need is a chance to reflect and get back to you in three days, can we do that? What I need is for you to check in with me to go, is this a good time to talk? What I need is a chance to change what we had agreed to, which is we meet every Friday morning. What I need now is to change that and just check in, in a month or two. So we're creating a boundary.

But then the last part, observation, feeling, need, the last part is request. Would you be willing to do that for me? And I'm silent because at that point, you're introducing agency. You're giving them the opportunity to move at the speed of trust for them to say what they're willing to trust. And they're taking their own risk in connection and they say, "No." Well, there's a little bit of boundary stuff you'd have to say then. "Okay, well, that's difficult. Here's what I'll need to do." If they say yes and they mess it up, you come back and you ask the same thing. So ...

Sara: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Nonviolent communication is a really powerful tool. That's where ... I mean, we've been talking kind of woo-woo and spiritual and a whole lot of somatic stuff. I'll do this work with a group of consultants at a secular firm that are ...

Sara: Yeah.

Troy: ... leading organizations through transformation change. It's the same process. Can I recognize it in my body? Can I observe it, feel it, make a request?

Sara: Wow, Troy, that's so good. It's so good. And I can see why our listeners would be honestly eager to be in touch with you because these resources are so effective on a granular, relational level on a-, the connection between the personal and the communal really transformative. And I'm just so grateful. It's hard to pack all that knowledge into a couple of quick conversations, but you've so beautifully invited us into a purposeful way of living our lives, and I'm so thankful.

Troy: (laughs) Thanks, Sara. I love hearing that and I love that this could be in service of the things that you're passionate and gifted at. I mean, that folks forming community would one know that they're not alone in the work, that there's a deep lineage and a breadth of practices, and skills, and relationships to help them with that. The feeling is mutual there.