



## Episode 881: Ron Paul and Connor Boyack on How to Teach the Nonaggression Principle

Guest: Ron Paul and Connor Boyack

**WOODS:** All right, so as I said, the book is called *The Tuttle Twins and the Golden Rule*, and there is in this book a certain character named Chief Ron, who bears a striking resemblance to a certain former congressman we all know, who is sharing some wisdom with the children. So let's start off with the nonaggression principle, because Connor is kind of framing it as really just an expression of the golden rule, as maybe an easier way to think about it that might be easier for people to latch onto, sounds less technical, sounds more universal and common. Let's start off with Dr. Paul. Maybe Ron, if you could say something about actually defending this principle in Congress for many years to people who were not very philosophical? How do you look back on that?

**PAUL:** Well, with a lot of tolerance and talking to myself, "Be patient. Time will help us all." But they don't think in moral terms. That was the biggest challenge, because I can remember saying, and I've said frequently, is that if you're on the House floor and you're debating on a bill, the two arguments that will be the weakest would be, one is a constitutional argument, and the other would be a moral argument. And so they're not much interested in even paying much attention to that. But if you had — and this was done frequently: we'd go down to vote and they would have on the desk there, they would say this vote is on this and this is important, and they would list all the special interests, the companies and special interest lobbying groups who they wanted you to vote. And I inferred and I believe that was probably much more important than arguing the case for nonaggression and the golden rule on a moral basis — although I tried to do my best, and it came up of course more in the presidential races, that was a better opportunity to make that point. But unfortunately, there's not a lot of people that think in those terms.

And the other obstacle that I had was that most people in Congress actually believe their distortions of what the Constitution is all about. We all take the same oath. They don't go home and say, You know, I take that oath but I know it's all wrong. They rationalize because they've been taught for so many years, they have not had any homeschooling or anything else, so they have been taught that the Constitution is a very flexible document. It has to be adapted to current times and you have this liberal approach. So that's one obstacle that you have.

And then if you get too moralistic, of course they condemn you for being moralistic. But nevertheless, there were still times when people would pay a little bit of attention

about nonaggression. But they generally don't think in those terms. I think we have a long way to go to get people conditioned to think in the libertarian terms of nonaggression and actually playing on this of the golden rule.

**WOODS:** Well, Connor, I bet we would have much more success trying to teach this principle to children than we would teaching it to a lot of politicians. So tell us about how you're doing that in this book, and introduce us to the character Chief Ron.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, well, riffing off the point you just said, Tom, there's a great quote — I wish it weren't, but it appears to apocryphal. It's attributed to Frederick Douglass. And he says, "It's easier to build" — not he says, right, but it's supposed that he once said, "It's easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." And I love the symbology — like, certainly we want to educate everybody, but to a certain degree, when people are so steeped in their ways, their biases, the ideas that they've had for a long time, it's very — that's a tough nut to crack, as Dr. Paul just said. My own experience with Libertas Institute here at a state level, working at our capitol at a state level echoes or confirms what he said. It's very difficult when you make an argument that's a moral, principled argument. They dismiss it as, Oh, that's silly and Tea Partyish and whatever, you're delusional. But when you approach them with data and evidence, somehow it's better and they receive it differently.

So the idea here is how can we teach children this basic idea. And Tom, as we've talked about on past episodes, so much of this stuff, parents already teach their kids. Don't hurt other people, don't steal their stuff, be nice. And so we piggyback onto that. Every parent wants their child to understand the golden rule, and that's really — in my mind, it's the positive element to the nonaggression principle. The nonaggression principle, I see it as like a negative right. It's in a defensive posture. Don't aggress against others. It's okay to defend yourself, but you should never do X — X in this case being aggression. So that's the negative point of view.

The positive is more: what *should* you do? And I think that's how we in the liberty movement need to do better. We often talk about freedom, but why aren't we talking about personal responsibility, which is the flip side? We're never going to have liberty unless we're all fulfilling personal responsibility. So we're trying to figure out how we communicate that to kids.

**WOODS:** All right, so let's talk about a specific example. Ron, you had this very memorable — well, you had a lot of memorable moments in the presidential debates, but one of them was when you were in South Carolina, and you came up with this radical idea that maybe the golden rule ought to have a little something to do with how we treat not just our neighbors, but people in other countries. And you were booed onstage for that, and I'm curious about your reaction to that at the time.

**PAUL:** Well, you know, I didn't say, Oh boy, this is so strange. It didn't totally shock me. It disappointed me, was the biggest thing, because this was considered to be a conservative Christian audience, and this has happened a couple of times during the campaign. And that to me was always a discouraging thing, because you would think that it shouldn't be evangelical Christians that are pushing preemptive war. So that is what bothered me. And when I talked about the foreign policy, what I'm talking about is maybe we're contributing to this mess. Maybe there is such a thing as blowback, and

maybe if we said that we shouldn't do anything that we don't want another country to do to us, that's when the boos and the hissings occurred.

And this occurred another time in Iowa at a key time when they were having a major debate and they excluded me. We had our own, and it was probably a little bigger than theirs. But nevertheless, the group that was holding the debate was a tax group. And I don't know, I never thought I was weak on the tax issue. And the other was a Christian group. But they didn't want to have me there. And I thought, well, there's something wrong here, because I've worked in the Christian community all my life and I was raised in a Christian church, and that is not exactly what I was taught.

So to me it was so disappointing, probably most disappointing because of not following the golden rule is what was leading to the killing and the wars and I thought had already put us into the position of becoming the aggressor. And if you're not careful with that, even if you are careful, they come back with, "Oh, you're un-American. You don't care about America. You don't care about the troops." And then they accuse you of all sorts of things, of being with the enemy, and it looks like that type of talk continues. But it was something that I was not totally shocked about, but very, very disappointed and discovered that the condition of changing these views was a much more serious problem and a bigger problem than I had ever realized.

**WOODS:** Yeah, let me jump in here. I remember that event vividly, in 2007, where, you're right, it was Iowans for Tax Relief and some Christian group. And they were having a tax forum, and they were inviting all kinds of candidates there. They didn't invite you. And I actually — so then you had your own event that had more people than all their whole event combined, even though their event had like ten candidates. Your one event had just as many. And I kind of date that — that along with the Giuliani confrontation — as the beginning of the Ron Paul revolution, because people began to see, Wait a minute. Something's going on here. These people drove hours and hours to be at — on the weekend, when most people are watching sports, they drove hours and hours to be at a tax forum so they could support Ron Paul, who was not invited to this other event. It made clear that if you are going to be disrespectful toward Ron Paul, you are going to feel pain from his supporters. And we did not realize the strength of those supporters until that event.

Now, Connor, give me an explicit link between the golden rule and the nonaggression principle. The nonaggression principle sounds wonkish, philosophical, abstract. But nobody would say that about the golden rule because they teach their kids that.

**BOYACK:** Well, that's exactly right, Tom. You may remember a few months ago when we were working on this book, I reached out to you and others trying to find what book talked about in a compelling fashion the nonaggression principle, because each of our *Tuttle Twins* books is based on an original text. And I wasn't aware of any, and so I emailed several people including you; you referred me on to some Mises Institute scholars, and no one really had a satisfactory answer. And what I found was that, while many books referred of course to the nonaggression principle — one of Rothbard's books goes into it pretty well in one chapter of the book — there was no treatise that we could kind of point to.

So I was in my office one day, I was looking at my books, and I saw Dr. Paul's book *A Foreign Policy of Freedom*. And this book, it immediately clicked, because this book for me was transformational. I came across Dr. Paul when I was watching a screening of a documentary called *America: Freedom to Fascism* by Aaron Russo. I had just graduated college; this was 2006. I watched this and I'm like, Who's that guy with white hair that made a ton of sense [laughing]? Here I am a millennial and I'm like, Who is this guy? So I watched a bunch of YouTube videos, I got the book, and I read through it like crazy.

And for those who don't know, this book is a compilation of many of Dr. Paul's speeches on foreign policy over the years in Congress, curated, categorized. And I saw in this book, basically advocacy all about the nonaggression principle. Yes, in the foreign policy context, but here was a book that was these bold declarations of actually putting into practice, when it's at its most difficult — when you're talking about foreign policy and intervention and conflict and war — here was a book we could point to. So that's what our book is "based on."

But it's not enough to talk about just, I think, the nonaggression principle. Again, it's like talking about our rights. We have negative rights. You have the right to be left alone. You have the right to your life, liberty, and property. Those are negative rights in the sense that no one has an obligation — people's only obligation is to leave you alone, not actually to provide you with things or do things for you. So those are negative rights. I see the nonaggression principle in the same way.

I see the golden rule, then, as kind of the cousin or the flipside to that, where it's the positive element. If we go around preaching, Don't tase me, bro, which is basically how the libertarian movement has postured itself, that leaves a huge hole and that's not very appealing to people, especially parents who aren't libertarian, who we could win over to our movement, bring into the fold and reach out to. But that's not a very appealing message. It's the quote we often hear, like, "Libertarians: we want to take over the world and leave you alone." Like, there's a great thing to that, but there are so many societal needs and issues where libertarians, especially from a very social, moral perspective, it's not just that we want to leave you alone; it's that yes, we want people to be free to choose to help.

And I think we need to talk more about that. That's where I see the golden rule connecting very well with the nonaggression principle, is to say no one has the right to force you to do X, but hey, that's a good thing. We should help people. Let's definitely do that. I mean, Tom, you've had on your podcast, episodes talking about social entrepreneurs trying to help the poor and educate and all these wonderful things that we can do, not through force, but through persuasion. So that's why we wanted to try, in this book, to fuse the two ideas together.

But it's crazy because we're talking to like five-, six-, seven-year-olds about blowback. We introduce what blowback is in the book. We talk about revenge, collaboration between people, justice, certainly the nonaggression principle and the golden rule. And it's Chief Ron leading the way. We've got our main character trying to resolve a conflict between the kids at this summer camp and helping them learn these principles and then put them into practice.

**WOODS:** Ron, let me ask you something about one of the ways you used to explain your foreign policy. I think the idea of American exceptionalism, the way the neocons understand it is very poisonous, because it really is the no-apologies, our government, right or wrong. It's amoral and it's awful, and it gets in the way of reflection. People don't reflect on, Hmm, I wonder if our government is behaving well or badly. They just think, "USA, USA." It's very unhelpful. But American exceptionalism is an okay idea if it's that we think we've got some great ideas and we'd like you to consider them. There's nothing wrong with that, and that's what you've promoted. But in particular, you used to give thought experiments that really were golden-rule based. You used to say, Well, how do you think we would feel if China was putting troops in Mexico? And if we would feel outraged by that, what makes us different from other people, that we're allowed to be outraged by that but other people aren't allowed to be outraged when U.S. troops are all around their countries? Did you ever get anybody who came up to you and said, You know, I never thought of it that way and that's causing me to look at things differently?

**PAUL:** You know, on occasion, I would. The one person — and I know, Tom, you've heard me say it. The one person that influenced me a whole lot was Leonard Read. And I liked him because of the philosophy, but also his method of teaching and the tone that he used. And he always said that if you used the wrong tone, it's not going to work. So yes, I think America is in many ways, from my own interpretation, a very exceptional nation, especially when we're talking about values of liberty and the success of it.

But where I was turned off was, you know, Oh yeah, we are so exceptional that we can do this and we cancel it out. It's Jacobinism. Yeah, we will preach you democracy, we will do this, and then we will force it. So I like to use the word voluntarism and set an example. I would talk a lot about set an example and let people want to emulate us. And this is what we do, rather than thinking that if you really want to change things — but the only answer that you can come up with for why don't they do that is that is the ulterior motive of other people. So yes, they tell us that we're in the Middle East to remake the Middle East and make sure people can vote and have elections and all that, but they won't admit that maybe it does have something to do with oil and power and who knows what. So they will keep arguing that it's for humanitarian reasons, and it becomes a total fraud.

And they have control of so much of the propaganda. That's the real problem. But they're running into some competition now with the propaganda that they can't just say that all these wars are so noble. This whole idea of us going over there and saying that we're spreading democracy — of course we're not in the business of spreading democracy anyway, but they use this. So we go in, we invade a country, we throw him out, we have regime change, we demand they have an election, they have an election, and they elect somebody, and it's, Ugh, he's not the guy the CIA supported so let's get rid of him. It just goes on and on and this reveals where they're really coming from. But unfortunately, it's a constant battle because we have the politicians talking from government, we have all the media experts on the TV.

So Connor and others, we all have a challenge, and that of course is why Tom has worked so hard with us on our curriculum in our homeschooling, because that is what I so strongly believe in, that you have to change people's minds and that the answers

are not political. You just can't say, Well, when we get another three or four votes, then we're going to get rid of the Fed. That doesn't happen that way.

**BOYACK:** Let me take a quick stab at that, Tom, because I have something to say on that too. I think Dr. Paul's reach is so broad and rightly so, where you ask him, has anybody ever come up to you and say, "Hey, that influenced me," the answer is clearly yes, but maybe they're not able to relay that impact to Ron. My influence is much smaller, and so I do hear a lot more directly from these people in these cases, where even parents that we're talking to, especially with the *Tuttle Twins* book, I think there's such great power in inviting them to consider how they would feel if it happened to them. And that's not something that our education system encourages. It's not something that the media facilitates.

It's not something that they just naturally do, and so when you do, as you just noted Dr. Paul has done, when you say, Hey, how would you like it if this country did this to you?, or, How would you like it if you developed cancer and you were thrown in a jail because you tried to use medical marijuana?, or whatever — when you use those thought experiments, I've seen it have great effect, I mean, directly in the people that I've used it with, with legislators, with other activists, with parents. I've seen such great power when you invite them to consider: if it happened to you, how would you feel? And if they're a rational, honest, sincere person, they're going to try and work through that and say, Oh man, if I experienced that, yeah, I'd be ticked off too. And that provides an open door to then continue educating them and persuading them, I think.

**WOODS:** Right, and I think a lot of people, when they meet Ron Paul, they don't immediately say, "Here are the seven arguments that you made that converted me." They say, "Oh my gosh, I'm meeting Ron Paul." I think that's what happens. One last thing. I know Dr. Paul's time is limited, but before wrapping up, I do want to ask, given that we are talking about children, there's a natural curiosity about the Paul household with Dr. Paul's own children and grandchildren and how you conveyed these ideas to them. Did you wait until they were curious and came and asked you things and then you answered them, or did you sit them all down and say, "This is the way it is," or were there books that you recommended? How did you handle this?

**PAUL:** You know, probably if you were viewing how we raised the kids, you'd probably think, well, they're paying much attention. They're not preaching; they're not doing anything. How did they impart these values? And I keep thinking about back when I was being raised, and maybe I got a little bit after my parents — my parents didn't — well, my mother got to high school; my dad didn't, no college and that sort of thing. But they were very successful in business and all. But they never said, "You're going to college." I never remember that. But there were five boys, and it was almost osmosis. We never received a lecture on how you behave. "When you go out, you don't do this. You don't touch alcohol. You don't — " We never heard that once. But for some reason, it was always there. We always knew what was right and what was wrong.

In the same way in our household, I don't remember ever — questions were asked and we talked about things, but I think it was more — I don't know whether that's the right word or not, but it sort of was osmosis. It was sort of in the atmosphere, and they sensed it. So they all eventually learned the philosophy. Some read more. Rand read a

lot. Other ones didn't read as much. And they just, you know, got attached to it. But they would go out. They were really wanting to participate as a family, go out and campaign, and that was exciting and they would maybe hear a speech or two, but other than that, it was never — we didn't have — our kids all went to public schools. There was not as great a need and there weren't any real options and we weren't cut out to be homeschool teachers and there wasn't as much — in the early '80s, we were still fighting for the right to have homeschooling education.

So I don't know whether that answers the questions, but we feel fortunate that they were able to absorb the values that we thought were important. But they were almost like never discussed. I mean, we attended church together. We did the praying together, but it was never a lecturing type of thing and very few serious discussions on, you know, this is right and this is wrong, don't do this, don't use drugs. It just never came up, and I feel like maybe we were lucky.

**WOODS:** Well, it apparently worked out well for you, because you have a pretty good-looking family in terms of everybody is successful. It's the kind of family a lot of people would love to have, so somehow you did something right. That's really, really tremendous that you can look at your family and say, Wow, amazing, there are children I'm proud of, not just for their careers but because of who they are. And I've met a lot of your children.

**PAUL:** And I want to add one more thing that's probably very, very important, is having a wife that knows something about raising kids —

**WOODS:** There you go.

**PAUL:** She always stayed at home and I did travel. Medicine was very busy, and when I first went to Congress, I always figured I went too soon because the kids were still small, and it's one of the reasons I went back home and I didn't want to give up on medicine. But when I was going back and forth, even to this day, she usually was always there with the kids and she knew where they were, and instead of just letting the kids go and go looking for trouble, the one thing is we had an open-door policy. You know, bring them home. So our house was the neighborhood meeting place. But she did a tremendous job in doing that and being the main child raiser in many ways.

**WOODS:** And it's interesting to be in her Facebook feed, because when Rand would be attacked during the campaign or whatever, or even sometimes you, she would post a link to somebody defending him, and she'd be ticked off. I mean, really, like a mom, just how you'd —

**BOYACK:** Mama bear.

**WOODS:** — just how you'd want your mom to be. Connor, as we wrap up, tell people how can they get *The Tuttle Twins and the Golden Rule* and indeed the whole *Tuttle Twins* series.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, I'd like to add a very brief not on that last point and then I'll certainly do that. I think the osmosis thing that Dr. Paul mentioned is key. As I look at my own

parenting style, if you give kids a textbook and say, "Here, you're going to learn about the nonaggression principle or the golden rule," they're not going to absorb that. But if they see you and mom living it, talking amongst yourselves about it, yeah, maybe — I mean, can you imagine having Ron Paul as your dad and going to his speech? You're going to pick these things up. I think we have so many parents out there who don't understand those ideas yet. They don't feel confident about them. They don't know how to have a discussion with their kid.

I think those spontaneous, informal interactions with kids are key for them to really absorb and understand this stuff. Rather than sitting down and drilling it into them and saying, Hey, you're going to read this book, we want to make it very engaging, and that's why with the *Tuttle Twin*, we opt for this storytelling format, where they just see Ethan and Emily, the Tuttle Twins, experiencing this thing. And in this book, they all go to summer camp and they see that the camp rivalry between teams deteriorates and they start fighting and cheating and pranking. And then Chief Ron steps in and helps them see a better path, and they can unite to solve a common problem and become friends again. So I think the experience and the storytelling is where we've got to go.

*The Tuttle Twins and the Golden Rule* is brand new, just came out. All the books are at [TuttleTwins.com](https://TuttleTwins.com). If many of your listeners have already got the whole set of books, they're just waiting for this one, you can just go to [TuttleTwins.com/golden](https://TuttleTwins.com/golden), and that's where you can get that book. But we're having a ton of fun. Super appreciative to Dr. Paul for consenting to be a part of this book. I think these ideas have such staying power, and being able to include him in this book and propagate those ideas for generations to come is super exciting to think about. So thanks to you, Dr. Paul, and to Tom for having us on today.

**WOODS:** Well, certainly thanks to you both. I want to note that at [TomWoods.com/881](https://TomWoods.com/881), I'll link to the books and I will also link to The Ron Paul Liberty Report, which is the best source to keep up with what the Trump administration is up to by far. So [RonPaulLibertyReport.com](https://RonPaulLibertyReport.com) is what you should check out. I'll link to all that at [TomWoods.com/881](https://TomWoods.com/881). Thanks very much to both you gentlemen for your time today. We all appreciate it.

**PAUL:** Great to be with you.

**BOYACK:** Thanks, Tom.