

Minority Rules

“Size is not always an indicator of success”

**Uncovering four powerful rules to become a
world impacting minority**

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Minority Rules

“Every great idea eventually degenerates to a thing called work.”

Cover design by **Martin Elvington**

Published by **Randy Schlichting** Publishing

Printing by Digiprint

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Contents

1	Who is a minority?	13
2	Groupies	23
3	How they see us	33
4	How we got here	53
5	Learning from minorities	63
6	Creating a healthy minority	83
7	Minority rules	89
8	The power of minority rules	105
	Onward afterward	113
	An apologetic	115

Chapter One

Who is a Minority?

"A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it."

GK Chesterton *Everlasting Man*

You are either in the majority or in the minority. There are either more people like *you* or more people like *them*. If you find yourself in any given demographic sampling, it is wise to know where you really stand, not where you *think* you stand. Whether the head count will be made by race, age, gender, citizenship, or creed, rarely will there be a tie. Some group is always larger and stronger than some other group. More importantly, if a vote is held on any given issue in which the same *types* of people vote in the same *way*, your group either has enough votes to prevail or they do not. It is simple math; majority rules and the majority have the power.

All of us have had the experience of being in the majority, and the experience of being in the minority. If your candidate won the last election, you know what I am talking about. If he or she did not win, well, then you *really* know what I am talking about. Whatever the result of the last vote, most of us do not walk around each day saying to ourselves or others "*Look at me! I am a minority*" or, "*Here I am. I am in the majority.*" Neither role is intrinsically right, wrong, good or bad. One just has more democratic power than the other. It is simple math;

Minority Rules

you are a minority or a majority, and majority rules if there is a vote.

Have you ever thought of your status as part of some demographic group? I can tell you, as a white middle aged male; I had not given it much thought until the past few years. I never had cause to consider myself anything but the majority until something began to gnaw at me; something that I could not shake and, over time, I began to see some things in a new light.

Now perhaps you are already thinking, “*What am I?*” I can help by saying, “*Both!*” If you are a woman you are in the minority on the planet. If you are a woman you are a minority in terms of CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies. If you are a woman you are in the majority of all people who teach. If you are a male doctor, you are in the majority of that group. Are you black? You are a minority in America, but not in Nigeria.

You get the idea. We are *both*, depending on the role or demographic sampling the statisticians choose to take at any given time. Does it matter? Does it really make a difference if you are a minority or a majority? Sometimes it does and sometimes not, but, what *always* matters is how you, and those who are like you, live out your status in the context of those who are not like you.

What matters even more is how you identify the *primary* minority or majority group that you associate yourself with. That key identification will have a massive bearing

Minority Rules

on how you make decisions because when the pressure is on, you will default to that identity.

I have often said that everyone wants to be in a gang. It is part of being human to belong. We have a need to be accepted in community. So, from the time we are kids on the playground we choose teams. We move on to Boy Scouts, Little League, Sororities, Rotary and AARP. We all want to belong.

To complicate matters further, you may find that from time to time you are a member of two groups that may be in conflict with one another. Both groups may tug on you to give what you have, and who you are, to them. It gets tough when that happens, as peer pressure can be immense. When a point of decision comes at which the two groups you belong to are at odds, you have to choose which affiliation is most important. That can have consequences that are challenging and even life changing. Do you choose gang membership or your family; the “in crowd” at school or your best friend; your co-workers night out at the ball game or religious duties at the local church? Those are hard choices that can shape your near and long term future.

This book is an attempt to encourage us all to see the importance of who we are, how we live and to bring to light the fact that, when we know who we are and, which of our minority or majority affiliations is the most important to us, we can move towards healthiness, making decisions in light of a clear set of values regardless of whether we are in the minority or majority.

Minority Rules

So where do we start? Knowledge of where your group stands in relation to other groups is useful. In other words, knowing if you are in the majority or the minority can be helpful. In many areas of your life you could quickly figure out where you stand. But I have found that in some areas, it is easy to think incorrectly about where I am. As an example, it is easy for me to think I am in a poor minority. I live in an affluent area of America and am surrounded by people who have household incomes in excess of six figures. Big houses and fine cars abound. It is easy for me to get the impression that I am a minority on the wealth index. If I widen the lens a bit, just a bit, to Atlanta, let alone Africa, I find that I really am in the minority; the other minority. I am rich. Most people, in fact the vast majority of people, make less than I do. I am in the minority of rich people.

In what way could I think I am in the majority, when in fact I am a minority? How about the fact that I hold to American ideals of democracy? I often think that our values and views are the majority report in the world and that we are working to correct the thinking of the minority who hold views contrary to “truth and justice” for all. Not true. The majority of the world does not think like America, act like Americans or have the same democratic values that we have. We are a minority.

So, it is useful to examine where and who we are in light of where and who we *think* we are. What is *not* useful is being in a group that collectively thinks and acts like it is the majority when it is the minority. Not only is that

Minority Rules

foolish, it can actually be harmful to the cause of your group. Until you know the truth of where you stand, and examine your actions to see if they line up with your position, you cannot be freed to make changes that would promote health in your group. Having laid that groundwork, I want to shout out the real point of this book.

This book is about uncovering the reality that Christians are a minority in America but collectively we think and act as if we are the majority to the demise of our movement.

People like to be winners, to be in the majority; Americans most of all. Christians who are Americans love to be winners too. After all, we are part of the American experience. As George C. Scott said in the opening scene of the movie "Patton" "*Americans love a winner and hate a loser!*" From the greatest generation to landing on the moon, to the tearing down of the Berlin wall, we have been winners. Internationally we view ourselves as the leaders of the free world. Within America, on the national, state and local level we want things to go our way too. We want our community to reflect who we are and we want the majority of our neighbors to hold our beliefs, even if they do not look exactly like we do.

In reality, sometimes, "we the people" are divided. Some of us are blue and some of us are red. Some of us are in favor of immigration reform and some of us want to build a wall. Some of us want more religion in schools and

Minority Rules

some of us want less. When there is disagreement over how things should be handled we do what is American, we politic, debate and vote. It is then that some of us become losers.

All of us have experienced the inability to muster up enough people to agree with us on an issue be it what game to play in the school yard or what restaurant to go to for dinner. When that happens, when we lose a debate but still hold to our views, and come to grips with the fact that we are now the minority, we have a choice: to float downstream like dead men along with the majority or to stay alive and embrace our minority status, keeping concerned and active while avoiding bitterness. It is not helpful to act like we won the vote and that the world will sing to our tune, when in reality the music has changed. If we passionately think we are right, we will continue to seek to persuade, but while we do, we must embrace who and what we are. This book is about Christians embracing their minority status in an authentic and healthy way.

I will not win a Nobel Prize for pointing out that it is very hard to go against the cultural stream we find ourselves moving along in. American culture is powerful and persuasive and we can do little as individuals to change it. Our culture is a mosaic, twisted together by politicians, businessmen, educators and philosophers. It is dramatically complex and it is difficult to understand what drives it or causes it to change. A myriad of 'majority status' groups reign over different aspects of culture; a media group, a technology group, a political group and a

Minority Rules

socially elite group among others. Minority groups abound too but they have been so deeply marinated in American culture that most just float down stream, dead to the possibility of making an impact. In fact, our tendency is to choose to join in with a majority group because the benefits of being in it seem to out weigh the cost of minority status. I believe Christians in the main have done exactly that. This book is a call to Christians to live as a minority within the context of American culture by adopting what I call minority rules.

I love Chesterton's quote "A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it" because it is a vivid word picture. If you are dead, you have no choice but to float with the stream. But, if you are alive, you can swim, even while knowing that the current works against you, the undertow is violent and the rocks are sharp. Those who really are passionate can do no other; swim they must. Sadly, few make headway, because they do not know the rules that will help them not only swim against the current but perhaps even change the course of the stream a bit. They do not know how to gain true power and they quickly tire, becoming as dead men, telling no tales of victory, floating along, only to wake up further down the stream, a bit wetter for the distance, wondering how they got there and wishing they would have hung on for dear life to a branch or, even better, been able to find a place to climb out. Perhaps then they would have been able to gather with others and dream of a way to use the current against itself to create something beautiful. Fewer will make the attempt. It is easier to float along and, in any case, being

Minority Rules

countercultural has been tried, usually failing miserably or changing little, at great cost. This book is about Christians learning to swim with passion and dreaming enough to create a movement inspired by minority rules that could change the course of the stream and be something beautiful for God.

You may have two questions, or more, about now. Are Christians really a minority and what are “minority rules”? Some of you will be tempted to turn to the end of the book to find the answers and read the rules, knowing clever authors put the good stuff at the front and back of the book. “*Are there ten, seven or three rules?*” you might ask. “*How can they be applied quickly?*” Well, feel free to look. I am glad you bought the book, even if just to skim it. I admit, I do that with books I buy. I do hope you will stick with me here though and let me build a bit of a foundation so that the rules will make more sense. It is a short work and hopefully worth the read.

One last point before we get started. This is for those of you who hate rules. As often is the case, a word picture is helpful. I love the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*. At one critical juncture in the movie we learn about the Pirate Code. Some mistakenly think it is a set of hard and fast rules. Not so. It is really a set of guidelines. I would love for you to view the minority rules as that; a set of guidelines. They are a way of looking at the world and life that may enable us who are Christians to live in a healthy way because we *are* the minority. We do not have enough votes to turn the tide in the direction we want, we do not have enough power to claim victory and *we never*

Minority Rules

will. By divine providence Christians are a minority and we need rules to live by in order to be healthy and not bitter, energized and not lethargic. That is what this book is about. It will not take long for me to make my points. I hope that it will be helpful to those of us who recognize our status, embrace it and then begin to think about the beauty of minority rules.

Minority Rules

Questions to ponder

1. Can you think of a time when you wanted something and did not get it? What stopped you?
2. Think of areas of life in which you are in the majority and in which you are in the minority. How does it feel different when you think about your minority roles and your majority roles?
3. Can you think of a time you were conflicted between two groups you were a member of? How did you resolve the tension?
4. When you think about rules, what emotions come to mind? How does the example from Pirates of the Caribbean help, if at all?
5. Have you ever considered using “minority” as an adjective to describe Christians in America? What difference do you think it would make for Christians to be recognized as a minority?