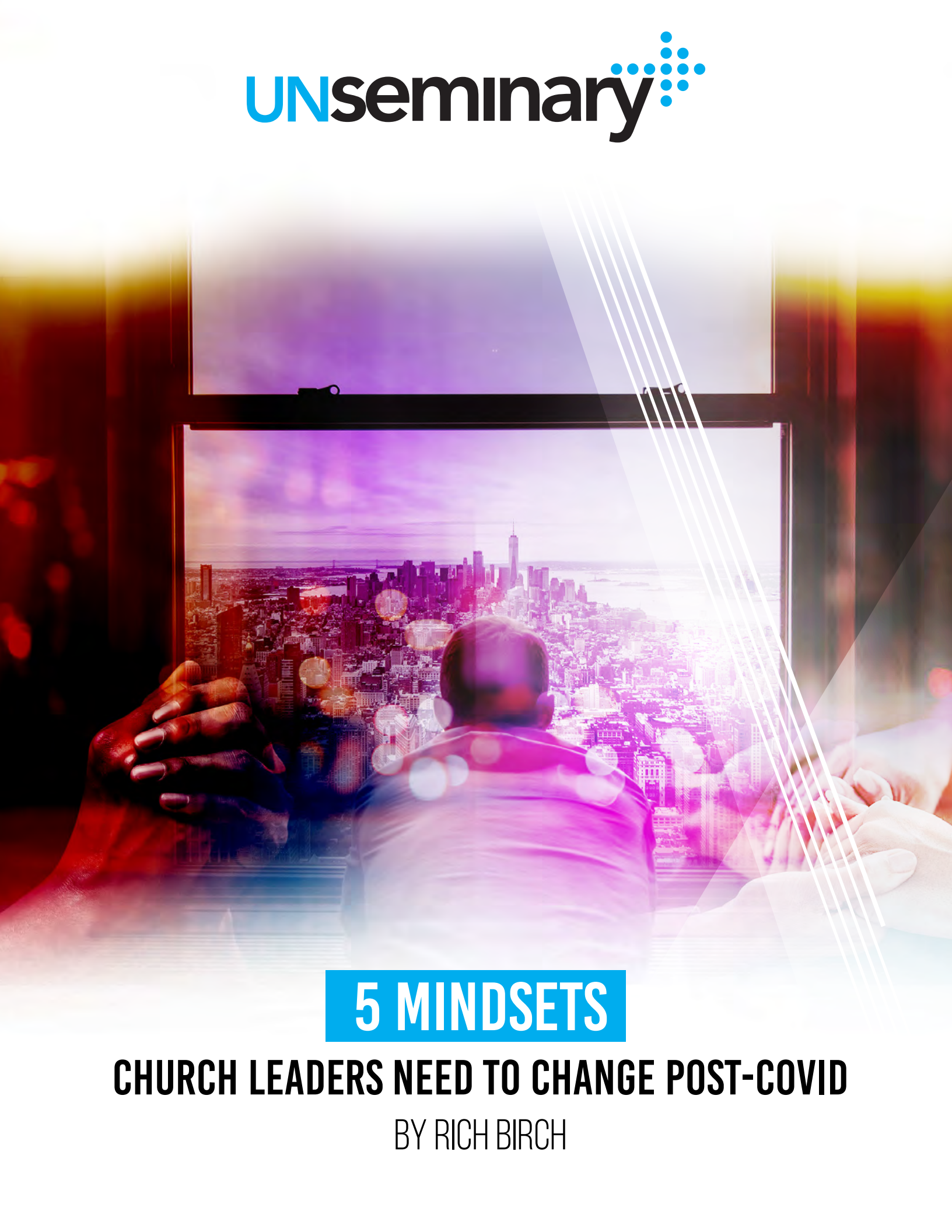


UNseminary



5 MINDSETS

CHURCH LEADERS NEED TO CHANGE POST-COVID

BY RICH BIRCH



As the leader goes, so goes the organization.

It's often been said that the mindset of a leader ultimately drives the behavior of an organization. It's a scary thought when you consider that our **internal thought life can express itself in the people that we consistently lead.** I think this is a truism when it comes to leading organizations of any kind, including your local church.

Over time, churches seem to take on the personality of the leadership. As we start pivoting out of COVID-19 and the incredible impact it has had on all our churches, we need to look inside and understand the mindsets that we have picked up over the last year. We must identify which of these mindsets may negatively impact our organization going forward.

Now would be a great time for you to **self-reflect and understand what you've been thinking** and how that might be working itself out in the organization you're in.

As a parent, I have seen how my habits, hang-ups, and hurts can come out in the life of my kids. **While we see it vividly in our kids, the same is true in the organizations we lead.** So here are five mindsets that you may have adopted over the last few months and need to shift or rethink as you go into full-on relaunch mode.

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

There's no doubt that over the last year you've had to make a lot of difficult decisions to ensure the survival of your organization. It first may have been to pivot to church online, if your church wasn't already online, and no doubt you've encountered many tough financial decisions.

We've all made several decisions that have been focused on how we stay afloat as organizations.

We need to shed that thinking.

If we continue to focus on survival only, we'll miss opportunities that God sends your way. [See this link for a huge opportunity that's approaching us as we speak.](#)

If we're just about survival, we'll miss the opportunity to take new risks and push toward new horizons.

What aspects of your personality are leaning towards merely surviving rather than thriving?

FROM KEEPING TO REACHING

One of the sad realities of watching church leaders talk among themselves in this season is that it seems like so much of the conversation is about getting back to our attendance pre-COVID. This is a potentially dangerous mindset.

It is understandable and maybe even natural but make no mistake, it's also dangerous. This is because this mindset may cause us to think that the goal of our church is to simply keep the people who were previously attending.

If we focus so much on keeping, we'll miss the opportunity to reach new people.

Your community has changed in the last 15 months and those dynamics need to be addressed and be considered as you think about reaching new people in your community. **We need to fully engage in reaching the world today and not wishing for the world of yesterday.**

You've seen a lot of new people connect with your church online and the question you should be asking now is how to accelerate that! **How do we identify what we've learned from our online experiences and push these lessons forward to reach even more people?** Even as your church continues to gain momentum in its regathering phase, the benchmark should not be how our attendance compares to our attendance in the winter of 2020. Our benchmarks should be determined by how our attendance compares to the community we're attempting to reach.

FROM REACTION TO VISION

Your leadership reaction senses have been finely honed, much like a cat's. You've had to make quick pivots over these months and come up with new solutions.

It's almost like we've been bracing ourselves for the other shoe to drop, but the difficulty is that shoes have continuously dropped over the past year. This is a helpful new skill for the future; however, now's the time for us to peer up over the horizon and start to ask the question: **Where does God want your church to be a year from now? What about five years from now? What about twenty years from now?**

What have you learned over the last year that can help you and your organization chart a brand-new course for the future? Stop waiting for the other shoe to drop and look up over the horizon and see what God's called you to do next.

FROM CYNICAL TO HOPEFUL

Cynicism is an acid that will erode your spiritual life if it goes unchecked.

I love the book *Didn't See It Coming* written by my friend, Carey Nieuwhof. It offers a conversation about cynicism and how it's a negative part of our leadership journey. We need to look for cynicism as it wells up in us and replace it with hope.

Replace the negative thoughts about how everything is going badly with a positive understanding of what God wants you to do next.

In some leadership circles, cynicism is a heralded trait. It's almost like we want to out-cynic others! Resist those communities and resist that way of thinking.

FROM US TO THEM

At its core, the pandemic has driven us to think internally.

It has forced us to travel to fewer places and it's pushed us to think more inside the four walls of our homes. We've been scared to shake the hands of our neighbors or give a hug to a new friend. If we don't address this we will radically truncate our church's ability to reach the community around us and to love the people God sends our way.

In what areas of your life do you find yourself looking inward rather than outward? **In what areas of your church have you shifted towards thinking more about the people who are attending rather than the people who aren't attending?** The local church is the only organization in the world whose primary concern is reaching the people who aren't connected with it yet. Let's get back to that. Stop thinking about us and lean toward others.

STILL LOOKING FOR SOME HELP WITH YOUR POST-COVID MINDSET? TRY THESE THINGS.

Mindsets don't shift overnight; it takes significant internal work and continual processing to push them towards where you need them to be or, ultimately, what God has for you.

Taking time out to evaluate your mindsets is a starting point, but from there, I encourage you to take steps toward developing the kind of mindsets that God would have for you in this season. Here are three steps you could take to help build a healthy mindset for a post-COVID world.

- **Gather your team and talk through areas of your mindsets that need to shift.**

Ask them to reflect on areas that they've seen creep into your church over the last year. Identify what bits need to be rooted out and the areas that should be pushed forward as you enter your next phase.

- **Process your internal thought life with a great Christian counsellor.**

Counseling will positively affect a leader's life. People who are trusted with the care of others should entrust themselves to someone who can help them work through their thoughts. Counseling is a great place to start.

- **Make journaling a habit.**

Journaling will help you to think about your thinking. Simple reflection on the day, writing down your thoughts, or even journaling your prayer life will help you externalize what's internal. Oftentimes making the implicit explicit spurs an incredible journey as you start to get a clearer picture of what's happening on the inside.

I'm cheering for you. **Thank you so much for leading.** I'm excited to hear what God does in your church and through your leadership in the coming year.