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There were no blacksmiths in the land of Israel in those days. The Philistines wouldn't allow them for fear they would make swords and spears for the Hebrews. ... None of the people of Israel had a sword or spear, except for Saul and Jonathan.

-1 Samuel 13:19,22, NLT

The Philistines had finally dealt the Israelites a conquering blow. To keep God's people under subjection, the victors removed all the blacksmiths from the land, hoping to paralyze the nation of Israel. In an agricultural society such as the one they lived in, the effect was devastating.

Satan's tactics have not changed much over the millennia. His main focus is on silencing the molders and shapers of the kingdom and its culture.

So why do we need blacksmiths in our local churches and the body of Christ? Primarily because of the nature and importance of their work. The blacksmith represents a breed of spiritual craftsmen who influence and set healthy trends for future generations—trailblazers, if you please.

Blacksmiths come in many shapes and sizes. However, one trait that stands out is that they understand the task of shaping raw material into something useful for the kingdom. Keep in mind, raw material rarely resembles the finished product. This kind of work demands huge amounts of creativity, patience and skill.

All the world's greatest leaders have emerged from raw material. And many of tomorrow's leaders are walking around in raw form, waiting to be shaped by a skilled blacksmith. Unfortunately, many ministry leaders don't want to take the time needed to work with raw material.

Blacksmiths are in great demand not only in the local church

but also in the marketplace. Scores of men and women are needed to help reshape our national culture. We desperately need influencers who can reform the ranks of business, education, government and media.

Models of these influencers are familiar to us. In the Bible we read about men such as Nehemiah, Daniel, Paul and Barnabas, who were blacksmiths in their eras.

It's time for the spiritual craftsmen to break free from the constraints of the Philistines. It's time to return to the ancient craft of shaping and molding men and women for kingdom service.

Let the blacksmiths arise and re-establish themselves across the cultural landscape of America, both in the church and in the marketplace. The battle is much too large for Saul and Jonathan to handle alone!

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