

# Nine Lessons from a Blitz Build

By the Rev. David E. Cobb

*A pastor in Texas reveals what he learned from a volunteer experience.*

1. **Expect blisters.** Those painful cushions mean I'm doing something new, something my hands aren't accustomed to. I'm picking up a new skill or dusting off an old one. I'm pushing myself hard enough to make a difference. Do they hurt? For a little while. Then my hands become calloused with good habits and the work becomes easier. I wonder what evangelism blisters feel like?
2. **Use body weight properly.** When shoveling hard clay, I have to stand on the shovel. The extra leverage breaks up solid ground and makes it easier to rake smooth the dirt. When building up the body of Christ, I must focus my entire self on the effort. Just as God exalts every valley and makes mountains and hills low, so I can focus my energy to reshape the world around me according to God's will.
3. **Drink lots of water.** It replenishes the fluids I lose through sweat. It also constantly reminds me to accept "living water" from Jesus Christ. Spiritually I will never thirst again.
4. **Wear name tags.** It's easier to work with people when I know their names. "Hey, um, you-with-the-white-shirt, watch out for that paint bucket! Oh, too late. Well, it'll wash off." Working together is a great way to meet new friends. But it takes time to learn their names. Tags help. I'm no longer a stranger when someone calls me "David." Perhaps in Christ I never was.
5. **Bend knees when lifting.** Safety matters, and not only to avoid back pain. I can set a good example. The lesson is broad: teach well, listen well, pray well, and care well. Whether I know they're watching or not, someone else is learning from me how to follow Christ. That's discipleship. Hmm. We also bend knees when lifting prayers.



6. **Use sunscreen.** I have to protect myself from too much of a good thing. My ears and neck testify in red that moderation is the source of virtue. Let every good thing be in proportion: sunlight, water, courage, pleasure and hard work. That means not too much and not too little. Virtue helps us live out our faith.

7. **Measure twice and cut once.** Try to do it right the first time. Mistakes are forgivable, but they slow the project down. If the project is sharing faith, it means not carelessly prejudging others. I'm glad God measures more than once and then forgives- then measures and forgives again.
8. **Paint upwind.** The issue isn't wind itself, because the wind is good. The issue is sawdust and dirt that blow my way from others who are doing good work cutting, shoveling, raking and sanding. It's good to do sensitive work upwind of the power tools. And if I'm making dust, it means looking out for those who are downwind from me. Just because the wind is blowing doesn't mean that I can't paint. It means choosing the right place and time to do what needs to be done. God reconciles the world to himself in Jesus Christ, but I choose how to share this good news in each circumstance.
9. **Live downwind.** I want the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow on me. Let me be filled with the energy, even the wildness, of God's sacred breath. It lifts me up, carries me on, and cleanses my soul. I feel the rush of something mightier than I in hard work, service and caring for others. There's a job for each of us. It's not just about 25 houses in nine days, or roofing or painting or sweeping of dust. It's about faith and life, yours and mine, and the service we are each drawn into by God's great power to save. As people of faith in the household of God, we have holy chores. Let's get to work.

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