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120 Seconds

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Recommended Citation

Sandouka, Kari, "120 Seconds" (2015). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. Paper 412.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/412

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120 Seconds

Abstract

Posting about living with impact from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/120-seconds/>

Keywords

In All Things, Advent, space vehicles, launch, expectation

Disciplines

Aerospace Engineering | Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

120 seconds

 [inallthings.org/120-seconds/](https://allthings.org/120-seconds/)

Kari Sandouka

One-hundred and twenty seconds. That was the time it took to know if you were a complete failure or a complete success. That was the time it took to know if the endless hours you put in actually mattered. It was also a time of complete silence. One-hundred and twenty seconds is the time it takes from when a space shuttle leaves the launch pad to when the solid rocket boosters break off. In reflecting on Advent, a time of expecting and anticipation, my thoughts go back to those two minutes: a short time span with very ubiquitous implications.

It was also in those two minutes that the space shuttle Challenger was blown up in 1986. Many of those I worked with during my six years working on the space shuttle program had started around the time the space program transitioned from Apollo to the shuttles. The hurt and shock from Challenger were very apparent. It was the one accident that no one wanted to live through again. Habits were changed. Attitudes were changed. Traditions were built, and then passed on. From then on, those who worked on the space shuttles were silent for the first two minutes of launch. Only after the solid rocket boosters jettied away, it was safe to clap, safe to cheer, safe to feel successful.

I made the mistake of clapping once, during that two-minute span. Someone was quick to correct my mistake. It was simply a rookie move (my very first launch), but it was a mistake that I never made again, not out of fear but rather out of respect. The way I was approached about clapping is what I remember the most: it was not a scold or anyone yelling angrily, but more of a whisper, such as one would have at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "We don't clap until booster separation." Six words ... but they made all the differences.

How I lived through those two minutes in the nineteen launches I witnessed probably does not matter in the grand scheme of things nearly as much as does all the work that went into those launches. What I did on a daily basis, even though at times it felt insignificant, mattered in the end. In its own way, my work was involved with getting to the final stage: a shuttle launch. No one person or one group could launch the shuttle. No single person could take credit. The teamwork that was forged during the months of preparation is what led to a successful launch. The way you handled yourself and the effort you put into your work showed. With each launch we made history, but what mattered the most was how people felt at the end of the day. If there was something wrong, we had processes to handle that. It was a continual effort to get better, faster, but above all maintain the safety of the astronauts and our workforce.

Like Advent, the two minutes between the shuttle leaving the pad and booster separation are filled with anticipation and anxiety. Having pride in your work over the months of preparation helps to ease some of those feelings, as do the traditions and processes surrounding the day of "launch." Those traditions and process gave me examples to learn from, and in the process, they taught me how I could be an example to others. They were more than just passing on job information, they were passing along values. These values are how we show what we believe in and how we live well.

As you live through this Advent season of expectation and hope, remember that whether its one hundred and twenty seconds or a lifetime, the way we live impacts all the little moments of expecting and anticipation. The traditions and process help us get through those moments, and more importantly, they shape how we live afterwards.