



BROADCAST TALKS

Stranded in Space, Grounded in Faith

by Barry “Butch” Wilmore



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NASA Astronaut **Barry Wilmore** served 25 years at NASA. He is a decorated U.S. Navy captain who has flown numerous tactical aircraft operationally while deploying aboard four aircraft carriers during peacetime and combat operations. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School, he went on to serve as a test pilot before NASA selected him to become an astronaut in 2000. In June 2024, Wilmore and fellow astronaut Suni Williams launched into space aboard Boeing’s Starliner during its first crewed mission. The eight-day mission to the International Space Station and back stretched into nearly a year. He tells the story in his book *Stuck in Space: An Astronaut’s Hope Through the Unexpected*. The Tennessee native earned a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in electrical engineering from Tennessee Technological University and a master’s degree in aviation systems from the University of Tennessee.

The following is adapted from an interview with Barry “Butch” Wilmore, conducted by Joel Woodruff, President of the C.S. Lewis Institute. It was broadcast on November 14, 2025, as a virtual event titled “Stranded in Space, Grounded in Faith,” having been recorded the previous month.

BROADCAST TALKS presents ideas to cultivate Christ-like thinking and living. Each issue features a transcription of a talk presented at an event of the C.S. Lewis Institute.

Notes

An extended written version of this publication is available on the CSLI website at www.cslewisinstitute.org/stranded-in-space-2.

The images throughout this publication are artistic illustrations created to accompany the text. They are not actual photographs or images from Barry “Butch” Wilmore’s mission or time aboard the International Space Station.



On June 5, 2024, Barry “Butch” Wilmore and Suni Williams became the first astronauts to strap into a Boeing Starliner capsule and be launched into space. Due to technical difficulties, their eight-day mission to the Space Station and back turned into a nine-month marathon. They were in essence stranded in space until an alternative ride home was made available to them. Butch and Suni’s positive outlook—their joy and professionalism in the midst of a harrowing time of uncertainty—captured the attention of millions around the world. On this broadcast, we’re blessed to talk with Butch, who thankfully was brought home with Suni via the SpaceX Dragon capsule on March 18, 2025. It’s my pleasure to introduce astronaut Barry “Butch” Wilmore.

I know that millions were praying for you and your safe arrival. Looking back to that day, June 5, 2024, when you were strapped into the Boeing Starliner, tell us what transpired in those minutes and hours before and after your launch into space.

Leading up to the launch, it’s a long evolution, years for us. This wasn’t training. This was a brand-new spacecraft. Suni and I both are trained test pilots. This was a whole evolution of development, finding issues here and there, rectifying them. We rewrote every single procedure, added procedures as we went through this process. That’s standard for

something new, but there had been several delays for some issues that we were trying to work through over years. So when we finally got to the point of lying on our back, strapping in, with the tanks all fueled and ready to go, that was indeed special, because there had been a lot of effort, not just by us, but by the entire team that had come together to bring this to fruition.

There’s a great deal of responsibility when you’re the one lying on your back in the commander seat, not apprehensive but excited about what’s to come. We developed a great number of tests to certify the spacecraft and get it ready for future missions, and this day was going to be full of those. That launch day, it wasn’t ending after launch. We had a whole slew of tests and tasks that we would be going through. Considering all that, I was just praising the Lord and thanking Him that, for whatever reason, like it says in the Psalms, He was giving me this desire of my heart. To be able to use all that test pilot training, never dreaming, back when I was first selected as a test pilot, that I would have an opportunity to fly a first flight in a new spacecraft. All of those thoughts, all those emotions coming together as you’re lying there on your back, as a countdown continues.

And so then tell us what happened as you’re sitting there and then were launched. What happened in the next minutes and hours before you hit the Space Station?

That day, launch was amazing. I had launched previously on the Space Shuttle, and I’d launched on a Russian Soyuz. They’re all different, a unique feeling, if you will. Thrust levels are similar but different, and the way things transpire when staging happens. When the propellant is completely expelled out of the first stage, there’s jarring. It stops. The spacecraft stops accelerating, and you come forward in your straps, and then the second stage . . . so all those spacecraft are different. No one had ever ridden an Atlas V and then Centaur, dual-engine Centaur, which are the engines and the rockets that propel the Starliner into space. We were the first to experience that. And it was thrilling and amazing.



We got to main engine cutoff, when you actually are in space. You’re not going to stay there long, because you’re on a trajectory that’s looping up high and then it’s going to come back into the atmosphere. So 31 minutes into that launch, we’re halfway. We’re at our apogee, the highest point above Earth’s surface; then we do a second burn to circularize our orbit, so we don’t reenter the atmosphere.

There are a lot of key things that have to take place at the right time to make sure that you continue the mission as planned. And all of that went great. Then eventually we got up, into orbit, full orbit, did that orbit insertion burn, did a couple of other burns, and then we got into our test plan, where we’re evaluating various automation and manual modes, and all of those went wonderfully well. Day 1 was exciting, thrilling, any emotion you can imagine. Satisfying, of course, having been several years in that preparation and the developmental process that we had gone through. So day 1 was great!

This must have been quite an amazing experience. How did it compare to the other previous flights into space?

If I were to compare them to vehicles, the Space Shuttle is a Cadillac. All capable. The Russian Soyuz—you know those cars that race in the desert? They’re bouncing around; I don’t know how you’d term those, but that was a Soyuz. It was capable, sturdy, tough, rugged if you will. And I would characterize the Starliner as a sports car. It was very maneuverable, very precise, what you would want if you’re going around a curve at a high speed. That was the Starliner. So a Cadillac, a desert racer, and a sports car is how I describe it.

So you get up on the first day, but the second day . . . tell us about that second day.

On June 6, we’re in the process of rendezvousing with the Space Station. We had gone through multiple developmental processes to get all this squared away. And things were going great initially. The Space Station is at an altitude. As you’re orbiting the planet at 17,500 miles an hour, the

Starliner catches up eventually to the Space Station from below, and then you start to effect these burns that bring you out in front of the Space Station, and then you effect your docking.

So we're in that process, coming up, raising our altitude up to the Space Station altitude, out in front of the Space Station, and we had a thruster fail, one of our aft firing thrusters. The thrusters are positioned kind of orthogonal, top and bottom, starboard and port. So top, bottom, starboard and port in these what we call doghouses. These thrusters, at each of these four positions, have seven thrusters that point in different directions. On each of those doghouses, two of those thrusters point aft on each doghouse. So you've got eight aft pointing thrusters. I hope that's clear. Eight aft pointing thrusters, but we lost one on our starboard side.

It's not greatly concerning; we'd had two uncrewed missions previously, and we had lost some thrusters on those missions as well. The crew module, where we are, and the service module are connected all the way through the mission. But eventually the service module detaches and burns up in the atmosphere. The crew module is what returns. So you don't get those failed thrusters back so you can analyze and assess why they failed. You have to use the data you have and also engineering judgment based on your understanding of the thrusters and their mechanisms. So those thruster failures from the previous uncrewed test flights—you don't really know for sure why they failed. You assess the most likely scenario.

So we had lost a thruster. Not so concerning. We build fault tolerance into our systems, meaning you can have a failure. Dual fault tolerance is our go-to, if you will. You have one failure; you can still have two more failures before that system would be dramatically affected. So we're still dual fault tolerant. We can still have two more failures and still be fine.

As we continue the rendezvous, we lost a second thruster, aft firing, this time on the bottom doghouse. That was when it became a bit more concerning. Now, instead of being dual fault tolerant, we're single fault

tolerant. And this is maintaining six degrees of freedom control. You have three degrees in attitude: pitch, roll, and yaw, right? And then you have translation. You go forward and aft, up and down, and left and right. That’s three more degrees of freedom. You put all this together, you got six degrees of freedom, attitude, and translation.

So now we’re single fault tolerant to being able to maintain full control of that sixth degree of freedom. More concerning. Again, traveling 17,500 miles around the planet, we acquired the velocity vector out in front of the Space Station; we call it the V-bar velocity. So we acquire the V-bar, we’re right out in front of the station, about 260 meters, and we lose a third thruster. This is very concerning, because now we’re zero fault tolerant to maintaining six degrees of freedom control. Had we lost that third thruster before we got established on the V-bar, the spacecraft would have automatically aborted. The software would have said, “You’re zero fault tolerant. We’re not going to even acquire that V-bar.”

So if we’d have lost it 10 minutes sooner, we would have left the vicinity of the space station, which would not have been a good scenario. I attribute that—obviously, our Lord is sovereign. He’s in control of all things—He determined that He was going to allow that third thruster to fail after we got established in a safer posture, if you will, because leaving the Space Station with three thrusters failed . . . I’m beginning to think, “If we don’t dock, we might not make it back to Earth,” because the controllability—it’s manual control at this point. I’m on the control. I’ve got . . . my right hand is controlling the rotation. My left hand is controlling the translation, the movement in space.

So I’m manual control, and they want me to hold at 260 meters. We’ve lost two bottom thrusters, one starboard thruster. The bad one to lose would be the second starboard thruster, because then we lose full six-degree of freedom control. I’m not sure what the control would have been if we’d lost one of the top or the port thrusters. But the thrusters, the aft thrusters, when you translate, fire on both sides of the spacecraft, because it’s got to be balanced. If only one thruster fires, it’s going to



cause you to be unbalanced in your attitude, right? You have to fire them both to be balanced, so your translation takes place.

We had two locked down on the bottom, one on the starboard—I hope I’m not going too fast.

Oh, this is—no! This is fascinating!

Yeah. So I’m thinking, “Okay, we could lose one of these others, and we might be okay, but if we lose that starboard thruster, we’re gonna lose full six-degree of freedom control, and then what’s the chances of that—that one thruster failing?” So we’re established on manual control, and then we lost that thruster—our fourth thruster down. We don’t have six degrees of freedom control. We don’t have the ability to do the forward maneuver. We can’t move forward at all. And all the other degrees of freedom are very degraded. Remember, I said they were pristine, perfect, for day 1. Now they’re not. They’re struggling. And I’m struggling to maintain attitude and position.

Even the sound of it . . . Sound doesn’t travel in a vacuum. You have to have air for sound to travel, and space is a vacuum. There’s no air. But the sound from the thrusters back in the service module behind us, it travels through the structure. Sound does travel through solids and liquids, so it travels through the structure, and then it gets into the air inside the capsule, so we can hear the thrusters firing. You’ve got the piston, a little piston that will open to allow the propellant to flow through and then close, and it does it really fast. So the piston would fire, open and close, and we could hear that. Day 1, we could hear that *ch-chheu, ch-ch-ch-chheu, ch-chheu, ch-chheu-chheu*. That’s close to what it would sound like. Day 2—we’re down four thrusters. It’s very different. To maintain the attitude and the position—the system is physically laboring, you can hear it. Those pistons are opening and closing so fast, every second, you can’t even determine how often. And it sounds like a machine gun. *Ching-t-t-d, ching-t-d, ching-d-d* is how it sounded. It was a sick spacecraft maintaining that position, and we could hear it as well.

So the Ground basically says, “Okay, 260 meters. Stay there.”

(laughs) “I hope we can.” Now, I’m definitely—“We’ve got to dock.” I don’t have full control of the spacecraft. It’s very difficult to maintain my position and my attitude. I’m thinking, orbital mechanics: you determine how spacecraft fly together in proximity. You’ve got the big Space Station, and you’ve got our little Starliner. Orbital mechanics: if you’re above or below another spacecraft in space, which is what the ISS is, their orbital mechanics dictate how they fly. Like, you’re faster. Even if you’re 10 feet below, you’re faster going around the planet, so you’re going to leave it. And even if you’re 10 feet above, you’re slower. You’re going to get closer. So I’m using orbital mechanics. For every control input I make, I’m thinking through how this is going to affect orbital mechanics.

And I tell you, again—this is the providence of our Lord. Sitting in that seat, in that left seat, when we launched the day prior, there was one astronaut that had experience with hands-on controls in a spacecraft in space. And that was me. I’d flown the space shuttle. I’d been hands on the controls. Nobody to that point that was left within the astronaut corps had that experience, but I had, and I had lived rendezvous and docking for decades. The Lord had put me in positions—combat missions when I was in the Navy. The Lord put me in positions, stressful situations where you can’t just let those stressful situations affect your performance. You have to compartmentalize and put a lot of those things aside and focus on what your tasks are. The Lord had put me over the years, decades, in many situations where that was the case. It’s like Joseph. The Lord’s preparing him for eventually what he went to, eventually into Egypt, put in prison, and wound up third in power under Pharaoh, and all the position. Step, step, step, step. He’s preparing.

I felt like it was the same for me, in my situation, that I had the experience. I had the background. Not because I’m good, not because I’m great, but just because the Lord had pulled me through all of those different scenarios. And then, when I’m sitting there in the Starliner and it’s

difficult to maintain the attitude and position and ability to visualize what my control inputs would make, I attribute it to the Lord’s providence and how He had worked through all of that.

So the Ground, Mission Control, wants me to maintain my position. We want to maintain our position. We have sensors on the spacecraft that see the Space Station, cameras, infrared sensors, LiDAR that see the station and actually build a picture of what the station is in its computer memory. And we have to maintain a position of looking at the station. If we lose that, even for just a couple of seconds, all that’s gone, and we will not be able to get it back and rendezvous with the station via this automated means.

So I have to maintain my position, have to maintain my attitude looking at the station. And that was very difficult. Again, I note my decades of experience in this realm and simulation. I have a thousand hours of simulation. Ray Bigonesse was our rendezvous officer. We were pretty close for these years. He’s a volunteer fireman, and he’d say, “Hey, I’m coming off shift at 5:30 on Saturday morning,” one of his volunteer fireman shifts. “Let’s go to the sim. Meet me in the sim.” I’m like, “Okay.” So 6:00 on a Saturday morning, we’d go into the sim, and we’d be doing various scenarios to prepare ourselves, unknown first flight, not knowing what’s going to happen. Never envisioned a scenario like this, but all of that is, again, the providence of our Lord working providentially through circumstances in preparation for what eventually took place.

So it’s hard to maintain position, hard to maintain attitude. And then the Ground says, “Okay, we’re going to send some test signals to these failed thrusters, to see if they produce enough thrust to reactivate them.” To do that, you can’t touch anything. That’s pretty hard. “Maintain your position, maintain your attitude, and don’t touch nothing!” for up to 15 seconds. So again, that was pretty tough, but just pointing, pointing, not drifting, maintain, orbital mechanics . . . “Okay, hands off!” And then they’d send the signal. Through that process, we got two of the four thrusters back. Now, the Ground thought that we had three of the



four back, based on their data. They relayed that up to me, but in the—we’ll call it the heat of battle—I did not get that message. I thought we only had two of the four thrusters back, which was accurate. So, again, the providence of God, my understanding was correct. Their understanding was incorrect. Somehow, the system had deceived them. Again, providence of God—I’m the one on the controls. I’m the one that really needs to know the correct information. And the Lord allowed me to have that information, even though what was sent up was different. I didn’t catch it. Again, thinking back, this obviously is the Lord’s working through all this.

I’ve got enough control now to where I can limp my way closer. They want me to come in to 200 meters. I start to do that, coming in to 200 meters. And I had been thinking through so many things in my mind, just firing. “What if we lose communication with the ground? What would I do in this scenario?”

Now that I have a little bit of control back. And my plan was to go all the way in to 10 meters, evaluate the controllability of the spacecraft; if it was good enough to control, I’m going to dock, because if I don’t, I’m not sure we can get back to Earth. I’m not sure we can maintain that attitude to do a de-orbit burn, go through that whole process. I’m not sure we can even get to that point and do that. So, again, we have to dock.

And I’m also thinking, when we had the four thrusters down, “What if I lose a fifth aft firing thruster?” This is uncharted territory! I have no idea what the control will be, if I’ll be able to control at all. I don’t know. I don’t know how it will affect it. So we get in to 200 meters. We have two thrusters down, and then we did lose that fifth thruster. One of the top thrusters failed. Now, by the providence of God again, we’d already gotten two of the failed ones back. So now we’re back to three thrusters down. We’re zero fault tolerant. By the flight rules, we can’t come closer to the Space Station than 200 meters with zero fault tolerant to loss of six-degree of freedom control. But I’m already thinking, “We’re going to have to waive that flight rule, because we can’t leave in this scenario.

We can't go away here.”

And in discussions after the fact, the Ground was already there, too. We were going to waive that flight rule, because that was really our only option. So again, “Maintain your position, maintain your attitude. Don't touch anything!” Same scenario. So I get the attitude, not much drift, hands off. They send signals to the thrusters again. These thrusters are reducing in thrust, and that's why the computer system is pulling them out of the mix. I hope I'm giving enough detail to make it understandable but not boring.

No! This is fascinating! Thank you.

They send signals again. We're able to get two of those three thrusters back. What's happening is these thrusters are reducing in thrust level. So the computer—it goes below a certain percentage, and the computer says, “Pull them out.” So now, to get those thrusters back in, reestablish them, we have to cancel out that fault detection software that shuts them down. Even if they're producing 20 percent of thrust, that's 20 percent more that we had that we still need. We had to do that. We canceled all the FDIR, it's called, Fault Detection Indication Response software for those thrusters, so they wouldn't drop offline again. And got those two thrusters back. Now the only thruster that was down was on the bottom. We're 200 meters. We're back above our fault tolerance, even though the spacecraft is still sick. It's still making that same sound, as it's controlling that *g-d-d-di, g-d-d-di*, as those pistons are opening and closing so fast.

Obviously, nobody knew all this was going on. I even remember thinking, “I know my wife and daughters. I bet they don't understand what's taking place here,” that this is a pretty . . . dire is the best term, because we either dock or we probably can't come home. We do have, in the spacecraft, a back-up mode, which kind of bypasses the computers and sends signals directly to the thrusters. If we couldn't have docked for whatever reason, we'd have likely been in that back-up mode. Even

if those thrusters were deselected, what little thrust they had, we would have gotten, so that would probably have been our desperate move. Fortunately, though, we did dock, obviously, and it was quite the relief when you get safely attached to the Space Station, because now that’s the safe haven for this scenario.

The first thing I did—I called the flight director, and I said, “Okay, we made it. Praise the Lord!” And again, I attributed all of this, this is the sovereign God working, the Mission Control team coming up with a plan on the fly. I mean, this had never happened before. No spacecraft in the history of human spaceflight had ever lost the ability to fully control in space. This was a first. To come up with a scenario and build that from scratch to get these thrusters back and get us safely docked, I attribute that first and foremost to my sovereign Lord, who was at work. And I attribute that to answered prayer. We had prayed, many had prayed, especially through this whole evolution, “Lord, help us find everything that we can find, any problem with this.” We found many lethal failure modes going through the process. And the prayer was also continued: “What we don’t find, have us prepared to handle the situation.” And that’s exactly what happened. Many people praying for many years, that’s exactly how it played out, the Lord answering that, because we were prepared. The ground teams, the crew on board, we were prepared to handle this unexpected, never-before-happened scenario and get safely attached to the Space Station.

It wasn’t decided until the end of August that we were not coming home on Starliner. But of course I knew it early. About the first of July, we’d been there a month, I did tell my wife and daughters: “You know, the most likely scenario is that we don’t make it home until sometime in 2025. I don’t know that we’ll be coming back on Starliner.” And, again, I saw the Lord’s providence playing out. I know many of your people who didn’t even know us were praying; I’ve felt the prayers throughout the entire process. The transition from—like I said, I knew early that we probably wouldn’t come back. It wasn’t like we just figured it out one day, and, “Oh, my!” I knew it out in front of the Space Station on the



sixth of June, that it was probably the most likely scenario.

But just the prayers and the comfort in that. And I found great comfort in things that I didn’t expect during the process, as the days turned into weeks, turned into months. How special music was! I mean, I was raised in the church. I know a lot of the hymns by heart. I can’t tell you the name, but as soon as you start playing the melody, boom, I know the whole song, because I’ve just lived it. I just didn’t realize or expect how special that was. I mean, I played music. I got to the point, as the days turned into weeks and then months, of gaining strength from music and the comfort of God’s Word in song, the hymns. I’m so grateful for that, that I could pull up—we had a little internet capability. It was sporadic, but we could tie in via satellite links and get internet. And I could pump in some guy’s hymn music and really worship.

I got to tie into my local church, which was special. Being a part of the local church is what God’s Word calls us to. The Lord gave us His church because we need it. We need it to live worthy. We need it to worship. We need it to be empowered by the power of the Word in this sinful world. We need that continual infusion. God gave us the church, because we need it. It’s His church. It’s the only thing He says He has established and He will continue forthgoing until He returns. We need each other.

Can you tell us a little bit of how you were able to connect there with your family and church?

I jokingly say, when I got to the Space Station, there was no room at the inn, meaning we had four crew quarters, and they were all taken by the people already there; we were supposed to be there for just a short period of time. I took up residence in the corner of a module. I mean, it’s in the open. I was there for the first four and a half months. I was just in the open corner of the module until finally a crew quarters became available, which I had for several months. Anyway, in the corner of the module, I set up my little home, including a computer, which had the internet capability. On Sundays I would pull up my home church, and also Grace

Baptist Church in Mount Juliet, Tennessee, where I grew up. A buddy of mine is an elder there, and another buddy is the teaching pastor. I'd tie into my church and their church every Sunday. And I'd sing. Back there in the corner, I'd have my headphones on, and I'd sing along—of course, it's one way. They didn't see me or hear me, but that fellowship was vital, important. I needed to hear the Word preached from the pulpit, not just because I was there, but it's the same thing here. And I need that. We all do. And it was a wonderful thing in the providence of the Lord, that He made this capability. It wasn't always continuous. You'd have gaps in the coverage. But it was wonderfully special and necessary. Like I said, not just in this scenario, but in all scenarios alike. We need the Lord's people and the Lord's church, worshiping collectively, collaborating together for this common goal of honoring and glorifying our Lord. That's why He leaves us here, and He's preparing us to share the blessed truth as He gives us opportunity, even like now, the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

How did your colleagues in the Space Station respond to your approach to dealing with the uncertainty and being in that kind of situation, as you sought the Lord?

I think, going through the processes—there were some things that we found out as we were going through the process. I won't go into those gory details, but things that could have rectified some things, if some decisions had been made, if some different things had occurred. You can't go back and change it. That's hindsight. But the fact that some of these things had occurred was somewhat frustrating, and dealing with that... I can't go back and change it, so processing that and moving forward to try to.... The whole thing now then became, "Okay, how can we rectify this?" find out what happened as best we can. Again, we can't go out and inspect these thrusters. These thrusters are not going to make it back to Earth. The service module, if it goes back without us, is going to detach and burn up in the atmosphere. So we're not going to get them back. How can we best assess what the issues were? And some of that—there was some back and forth with the Ground and all of that,

and dealing with that was challenging. Life is challenging. How you deal with that is challenging.

We’d have those discussions, of course, on the Space Station. But ultimately, you can only do what you can do. And that’s the thing I’ve learned during this life—that I’m in control of nothing. The Lord is in control of all things. But the things I have no purview over, why am I going to get frustrated or fret over that? I can’t do anything about that. And that’s my trust in the Lord. I don’t proselytize openly from my position as an astronaut. I never did that, in press conferences and those type of things, unless I get asked the question. And I know the Lord’s sovereign there. So we were having a press conference at one point, and one reporter—again, it’s just a camera. We don’t see anybody, but we can hear them. One gentleman asked, “Captain Wilmore, what is your number-1 takeaway from all of this?” And I’m like, “Okay, that’s the question!” “My number-1 takeaway is, in all situations, I am content, because I know my Lord is sovereign. He’s in control. He’s working out His plan and His purposes, for His glory and our good, in and around all things. Because of that, I am content.” There’s a lot of theology in that comment; I know I didn’t have time to go into in detail. But He gave me that opportunity to share that.

Then, from that one question, every press conference after that someone would ask something similar. So I could expound on it a little. And I’ll share it for you: I think about Paul. Paul, the Scriptures tell us, in Corinthians, I believe it is, that he was whipped, right? Five times, 40 lashes minus one. It happened five times. He was beaten with a rod three times. He was stoned and left for dead. He was shipwrecked multiple times, a day and a night in the depths of the sea. He was maligned, cursed, and hated. And through it all, in Philippians, he says, “Hey, you know what? I am content.” It doesn’t mean he enjoyed—physically, emotionally enjoyed those scenarios. It doesn’t mean like, “Oh, my Lord, I’ve been flogged five times. Let’s do it again!” It doesn’t mean that. It means that he knew he was in the center of the Lord’s will through it all;



therefore, regardless of the circumstances, “I know how to abound, and I know how to be abased.” Regardless of the circumstances, he’s content.

That’s strengthening to me, understanding the Scriptures, understanding those, seeing this play out in so many aspects of my life, thinking about these things that I shared about being on the controls and the difficulty, and the Lord had prepared and prepared and prepared where, like I said, on the controls, it’s not like I’m thinking, “Okay. Step by step, what’s going to happen with orbital mechanics if I do this and do that?” That’s just the way I think. Because I’d done it so much, I didn’t have to put it into active thoughts. It’s almost inactive thoughts. “I know this is going to do this. I know this is going to do that,” with respect to the orbital mechanics and how these two spacecraft fly in proximity to each other. Nobody had more experience in that than me. And part of that was the extension of our launch time frame, that we’d been years past when we were originally supposed to launch. And the developmental process in which all this was coming together culminated in those actions that were like second nature. Not because I’m good, just because that’s where the Lord had positioned me.

[An extended written version of this publication is available on the CSLI website at www.cslewisinstitute.org/stranded-in-space-2. Video of the complete version of this interview is available at www.cslewisinstitute.org/stranded-in-space. Additional information about the topic of this interview is included in the book *Stuck in Space: An Astronaut’s Hope Through the Unexpected* (Heirloom Press, 2026).]



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