

Space Ray Pathfinders #2 – Rocket Wheels

“A ROCKET WITH WHEELS AND HANDLE BARS!” It was the repeated phrase from several of the preteen clubbers, as they pointed at the wall poster Space Ray “Gramps” had posted earlier in the week. The bold lettering simply stated, “BICYCLE ROCKETRY”.

Jake, the quietest of the clubbers, sat motionless, staring at a blank portion of the wall. It was as though his thinking was in another galaxy; a land where people lived without fear, without empty tummies that moan to be filled, without grownups that constantly argue, and evil people who do ugly unGodly things to each other. Jake had no idea what kind of rocket that Gramps was about to tell them about – with wheels or whatever, but the quiet preteen wished it could take him to that other galaxy, to a planet called HUG.

Not many people knew this, but almost every Saturday, before the other clubbers arrived, Jake entered the OB (Space Ray Pathfinders Operations Bay) and made sure noone was watching him. He'd silently walk to his favorite wall poster and softly slowly move his hand across its words. Somehow he wanted the truths of the words to take root in his heart – a heart that needed promise, purpose, and a big dose of lasting peace. The words on the poster stated, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27).

Gramps carried the bicycle wheel in one hand beside him as he walked the fairly short path to the old store room near the Mathers Rocket and Space Museum and the tall proud Titan II ICBM. The fervent prayer on his lips was begging God to give him the words, the heart to look past the faults of the preteens he was about to spend this Saturday and all the other club times with. The times he'd do rocket repair work with the precision of a surgeon, was nothing like his desire to do his best – with God's guiding hand.

Gramps entered the OB and placed the bike wheel on the table at the front of the benches the clubbers sat on. Like a space shuttle locking onto the International Space Station, Gramps eyes

met the eyes of each clubber, with something that some might call a visual hug, of some sort. It was certainly more than one of Star Trek Spock's mind meld.

The club time was opened with prayer, as always, and then the club's purpose was stated. The silver-haired Pathfinders leader announced, “I need two volunteers.” 'Course everyone shot to their feet, waving a hand, to be chosen. Two were invited forward and asked to hold the bike wheel, by its axle, between them.

The lesson began, “Clubbers. What would happen if Nancy was to let go of her side of the axle?” The responses were all correct. The wheel would fall on Benny's foot or next to him. Gramps told Nancy and Benny to hold onto each end of the axle and keep their fingers and clothing away from the spokes. Space Ray began spinning the wheel pretty fast and then told Nancy to carefully, slowly let go of her end of the axle.

To everyone's amazement, the spinning wheel stayed right in place, only being held by Benny's side of the axle. Before the wheel slowed its spinning very much, Nancy was told to take hold of her end again. The experiment was repeated.

“Guys. This bike wheel demonstration shows us how a gyroscope works. A spinning wheel wants to keep right on spinning right where it is. Because of this, a gyro is the main part of a rocket's guidance system. No rocket could leave the earth without one, and stay on its flight path very long.”

“Each of you clubbers and me too, are like rockets... we need to have a path to follow and something to keep us moving straight and true to that path. I have a question. The rocket has a gyro to keep it on its path. What do you and I have to keep us going straight and true, and on the path we should be on?” Everyone wanted to answer, but it was Bobby that picked up a picture of a Bible and laid it on the table next to Gramps.

Jake decided in his heart, that he'd take a gyro and the Bible to travel to his planet HUG.

CAUTION! - This should only be done with at least one adult present.