

# “How To Become Joe Cool!”

John 9:39-41



In this painting by James Tissot, “The Blind Man Testifies About Christ”. The man who had been healed of blindness at the pool of Silom points to Jesus as the Christ [John 9].

It is easy to develop a superiority complex, especially when we don't want to change. Jesus often pointed out to the religious leaders of his time their hypocrisy in condemning others because they believed themselves to be morally superior. Jesus heals the man born blind in John 9.

## John 9:39-41 [ESV]

39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?"

41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

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Charles M. Schultz [1922-2000] in 1943, four years before he began his career as a cartoonist. “Peanuts” was built in 1950 off a previous series called “Lil Folks”. It would propel Schultz to the top of the cartoonist world. Many of his design and publication ideas were copied by other cartoonist. His characters are still beloved and recognized worldwide. He grew up Lutheran in the Minneapolis area. After WW2 he switched to Church of God, Anderson Indiana. He would eventually join a United Methodist church after his marriage in 1951. His deep faith led to a 1965 Youth Group comic book for Church of God, Anderson.

A person who grows up deeply religious often has blind spots in their faith and practice. One of the most dangerous is the belief that a person’s motives are better and more noble than other people. This creates a dangerous blindness and hubristic type of pride.

## John 9:20-22 [ESV]

20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.

21 But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)

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These are Chinese Smoky Quartz glasses. They were developed by Chinese judges in the 1200s for use in court where they wished to hide their expressions while trying a case. Supposedly, this would disguise the judge's intentions in the case.

It is easy to be bullied by people who disguise their intentions behind “shades” of meaning and word games. This blind man's parents who were aware of who had healed him were terrified of the opinion and actions of the Pharisees in their synagogue.

John 9:33-34 [ESV]

33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

34 They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

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This is the 1<sup>st</sup> appearance of Snoopy in Oct. of 1950, he was not named until November. Originally he was Peppermint Patty’s dog, over the years he had various other implied owners. He became Charlie Brown’s dog officially on Sept. 1, 1958. His first thought balloons appeared in March 1952. He stood on his hind legs first in January of 1956. In 1965 Snoopy’s most beloved alter ego was created – The World War Flying Ace vs. The Red Barron.

The blind man stood up to the bullying of the Pharisees and witnessed to the power of Jesus Christ. Often following Christ means that we must look honestly at our own blindness and that of the experts.

## Luke 18:10-14 [ESV]

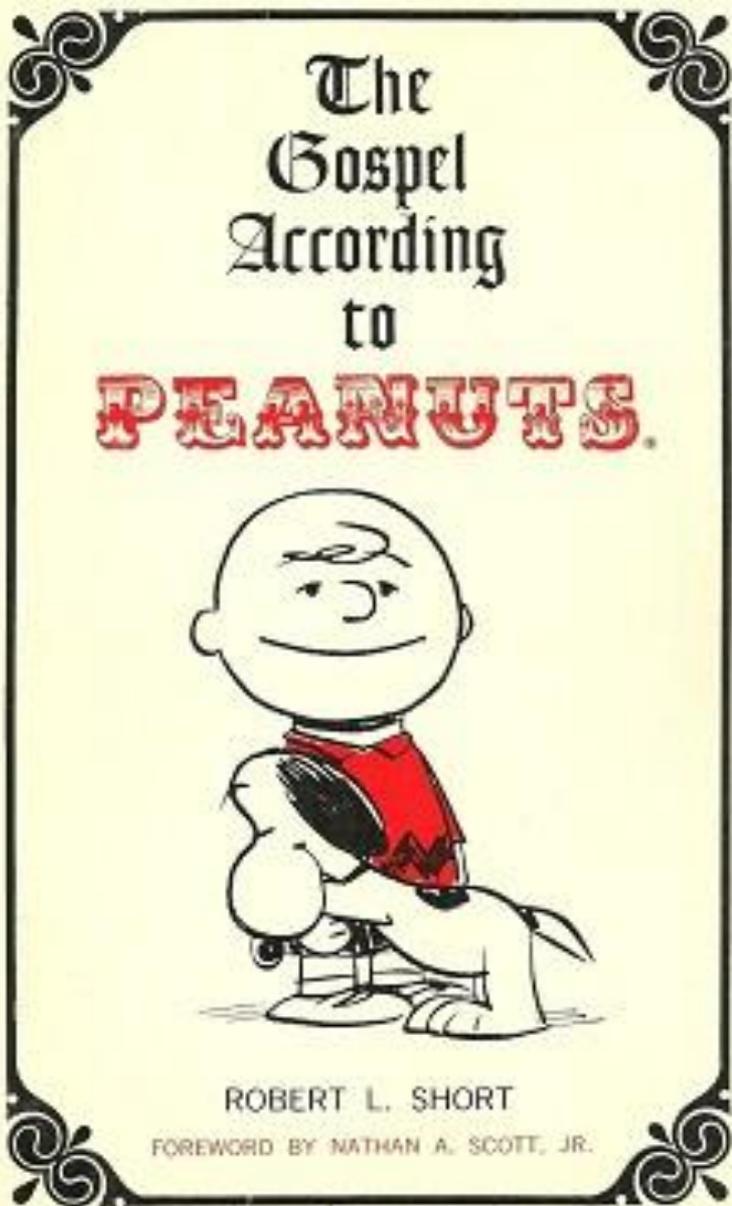
10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

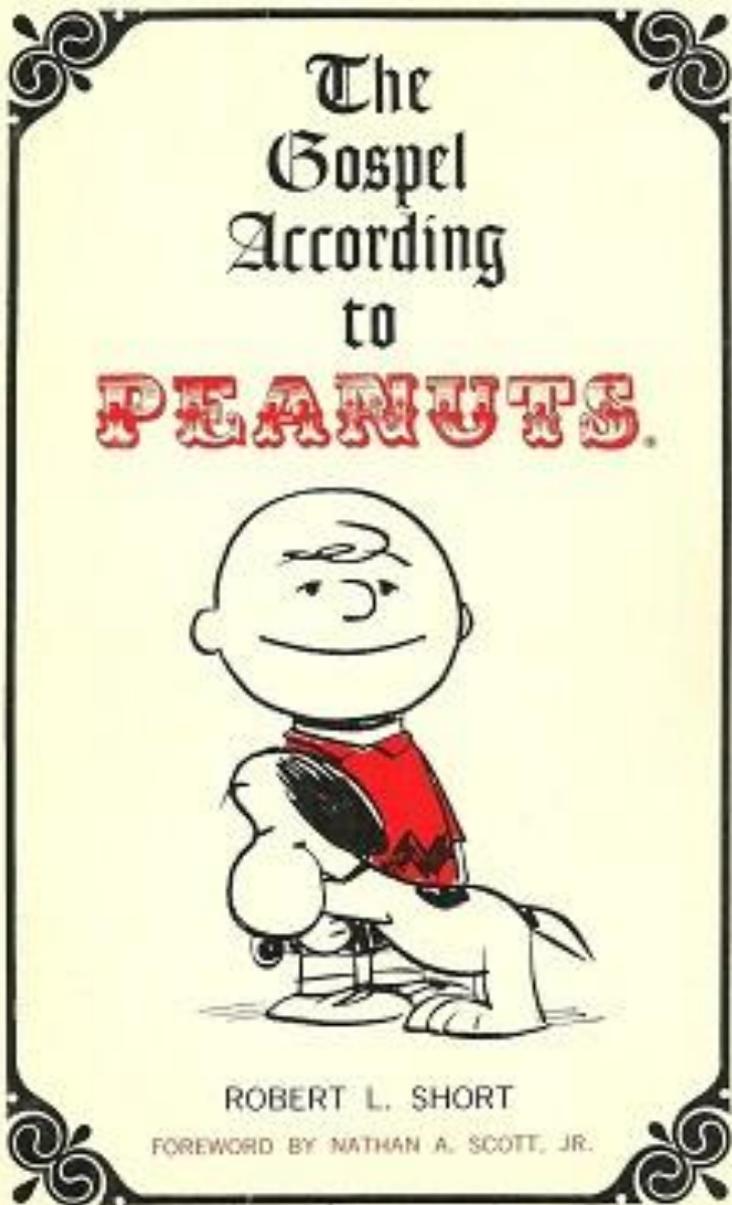


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As I was entering my teens the Peanuts comic strip became a passion of mine. I borrowed all the Peanuts comic strip books from my school library and read them. One Peanuts book my Dad had in his library was "The Gospel according the Peanuts" [1965 - author: Robert L. Short]. It was essentially Robert Short's Masters thesis in theology.

*"The Gospel According To Peanuts, 1965 by Robert L. Short –Charlie Brown and Snoopy are seen as types of Christ.*



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Mr. Short's position was that Charles Schultz was reflecting the character of Christ through Charlie Brown and Snoopy. While I would agree partly with his conclusion concerning Charlie Brown, I feel he read more of his own personal desire into the character of Snoopy.

As religious people we can sometimes identify too closely with our own vision of spirituality.

*"The Gospel According To Peanuts, 1965 by Robert L. Short –Charlie Brown and Snoopy are seen as types of Christ.*

**June 26, 2022**

## Isaiah 42:18-21 [ESV]

18 Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!

19 Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD?

20 He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.

21 The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious.



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In my early teens I was drawn to Snoopy as “Joe Cool”. I thought that it reflected a view of Christ that I found appealing. At the time I thought Schultz was a deeply committed Christian. I wanted to be “Joe Cool” like most teenage boys. I was familiar with Charles Schultz’ history of Christianity. He had praised Robert Short’s book and given permission for the use of the panels that Short used to illustrate his points. So I viewed “Joe Cool” as a reflection of Christ. But in reality he was a “foil” that Schultz to tryout directions for life. For me he was an image that hid my teenage insecurities. Much as Snoopy’s sunglasses his his own insecurities.

Joe Cool, one of Snoopy’s alter egos was introduced in May 1971. This character would become Snoopy’s 2<sup>nd</sup> most beloved alter egos. The sunglasses made the character.

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I discovered that during this time frame [1970-72] Schultz was involved in an extra-marital affair with a 25 year old colleague that led to the failure of his first marriage in 1972. At the time I thought Schultz was a deeply committed Christian, shortly after his divorce Schultz quietly denied having Christian faith and adopted a spiritualized Secular Humanism. I was deeply shaken by this revelation in my late teens. Joe Cool, as I now understand the character, was a means for Schultz to justify his change of heart and his actions leading to the break-up his marriage. During his divorce a series of “Joe Cool” strips reflected his attempt to play the victim in the situation, in my opinion.

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The sunglasses are what made this character. In John 9 the Pharisee’s are challenging the blind man healed by Jesus. Essentially, they said to him, “you’re ignorant, because you’re not cool like us”.

In the 1972 strip series Linus is kicked out of the house by his sister Lucy, Joe Cool takes him into his dorm [dog house] and supports him against his sister. I think the implications are pretty clear.

When Jesus is not Lord of our life we turn to our own imaginations to justify our behavior instead of coming to Jesus Christ in honest confession asking for forgiveness.

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John 9:35- [ESV]

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

36 He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."

38 He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

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Modern sunglasses styled after the 1920's Foster Grant sunglasses that made sunglasses cool. Prior to the 1920's sunglasses were made of expensive glass by optometrists. Foster in the 1920's shifted from making hair combs out of cellulose plastic to making sunglasses out of injected cellulose plastic [this was used for clear plastics prior to petroleum based plastics]. He marketed them as making you look cool.

Sunglasses became popular in the mid 1800's for a variety of reasons. They were expensive, so they became a status symbol, but many celebrities bought them to deal with one of the effects of Syphilis which creates a sensitivity to light. The use of sunglasses actually was a cover up for the effects of an immoral lifestyle. Because celebrities wore them, sunglasses became cool. *[Fortunately with the advent of penicillin in the 1940's, Syphilis could be cured]*

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The Blind Man washing in the Pool of Silom by James Tissot.

Like the Pharisees we become offended when Jesus challenges us on our coverups. We pretend we are Joe Cool because we are really blinded by the light and not willing to be healed by the grace of Jesus Christ.