



## Chatshow Pharisee and Tax Collector

**Content and Purpose:** Intended as a modern version and adaptation of the parable. The Tax Collector is a drug dealer, but can be seen as anyone who would be cast out by society. The role of the Pharisee is taken by a judgemental studio audience, each of which personifies the idea of righteous self-confidence, and the belief that they will get into Heaven if they live nice, good lives, but that a sinner like a drug dealer could not be forgiven. However, please note that the sketch does not pretend to be an in-depth discussion of the issue of drugs.

**Comments and Notes:** Specially commissioned and written for the OICCU mission 1999, but it could be used in almost any setting where you can get the crowd to work with you! The characters were envisioned with the CADS '99 members in mind, so feel free to update and change bits that don't work.

### **Cast:**

Perry the Host  
Mrs Anne Hollow (Mother of Laura)  
Drug Dealer Danny  
Rev. Dr. Robert Obadiah Brown "Bible Basher Bob"  
Ordinary Jo  
Deputy Chief Constable Jill "Tuck" Tucker  
Irritating woman Tammy  
Mrs Middle Class  
Applause Man

**Starting positions:** The lights go up on a "controversial" chat show scene – along the lines of Ricki/Jerry Springer. A chair is centre stage for the main guest, and the others are scattered around the audience, so that the host may have to climb over a few people to interview them.

*(Chat show music – Applause Man enters with sign saying "Clap your hands for Perry!" The crowd goes wild. He turns sign around to reveal "Sponsored by Thighmaster Plus" and crosses the back of the stage)*

Perry: Hi there and welcome to this week's edition of "Perry" – hard hitting, controversial, and the top of the crop for topical television. On today's show we invite you to be judge and jury on the hot topic of drugs – hard drugs. Our special guest today was convicted of selling hard drugs in 40 schools and nightclubs in this area. For legal reasons, we cannot divulge his real name. But could you please welcome, on stage, Danny...

*(Crowd goes wild, booing, etc.)*

*(Danny enters, looks downcast and defeated, sits down on chair in the middle of the stage. Perry circles him, appealing to crowd)*

Perry: Now, we all know what this man did was wrong. Right? *(agreement, mmms from crowd)*. But the question we'll be tackling today is: can this man be forgiven?

*(Applause Man crosses with big sign, "Can this man be forgiven?")*

Perry: We'll be hearing views from some specially invited guests, Deputy Chief Constable Jill Tucker, head of narcotics investigations in the Greater Metropolitan area, and the Rev. Dr. Robert Obadiah Brown, known affectionately to his friends as "Bible Basher Bob".



Tammy: (*Stands, whoops*) Go Perry, Go Perry, Go Perry!

(*Crowd cheers with her...*)

Perry: But before talking to Danny himself (*boos from crowd*) we'll be taking some opinions from our live studio audience.

Tammy: You're going down, boyfriend! You foul!

Perry: Well, at least we know where *she* stands. But let's first talk to Mrs Anne Hollow. Sshh, sshh... (*a much more serious tone*) Mrs Hollow's 16-year old daughter Laura was encouraged to buy thirty pounds worth of crack cocaine from this man, and paid for it with her life. So, Anne, tell us, if you are able – what are your feelings towards Danny, and can he be forgiven?

Anne: Laura was a good girl, everybody liked her, and I fought hard to bring her up the right way, and you took her away from me. So I only have one thing to say to you: you're beyond forgiveness.

Perry: But is anyone beyond forgiveness? Surely the 12 years he served in prison have paid his debt to society – doesn't that entitle him to forgiveness?

Anne: There are some people – murderers, rapists, drug dealers – who are too evil to be forgiven, and that man is one of them. They should just throw away the key for people like that.

Perry: We appreciate how difficult it was for you to come face to face with Danny today. Thank you, Anne.

(*Murmurs of sympathy from crowd*)

Tammy: Don't you worry, honey! He'll get his! (*Turns to Danny*) Your day of judgement is coming, boy!

Perry: Umm, thank you, thank you. We'll come onto that later if time allows. (*Approaches Ordinary Jo, who wasn't looking keen to speak*) So what about you? What do you think? Is there any crime too bad to be forgiven?

Jo: Yeah, probably. Rape and stuff.

Perry: But what about you? Have you ever done anything bad?

Jo: Well, not really. I mean, I've never done anything wrong like *that*. I don't think about it much, but I guess I try to be nice to people, make the world a better place. If there is a God out there, it's people like Danny who should be worried, not people like me. I'm okay.

(*Murmurs of approval from crowd*)

Perry: Thanks – it sounds like some of our studio audience agrees with you on that. (*Pause, listens to earpiece*) Before we take a gratuitous commercial break to interrupt the flow of our discussion, let's see what one of our special guests has to say about this. Deputy Chief Constable Jill Tucker, hello.

Tucker: Perry, you can call me Tuck, the boys on the beat do.



Perry: (*Embarrassed shuffling papers, obviously has lost his place*) Deputy...er...Tuck...what do you think of a man like Danny?

Tucker: Well, y'know, Perry, in my years on the force, I've seen too many good people driven to homelessness and prostitution and worse because of crooks like Danny. I thank God I'm not like these criminal scumbags, and I regard it as a privilege to keep them off the streets.

Perry: But is this "scumbag", as you call him, beyond forgiveness?

Tucker: We on the right side of the law protect you law-abiding citizens from scum like that. I'll tell you, society needs a sense of right and wrong. And when it comes to right and wrong, it's either lawful or illegal, and what Danny has done is against the law, against the good of society, and against any kind of human decency. I tell you, for people like that, there is no forgiveness.

Tammy: Tuck, Tuck, Tuck, Tuck! (*Audience joins in, obviously appreciating Tuck's remarks*)

Perry: Now on to our gratuitous commercial break (*cheesily frozen at camera*). But be right back for part two of Perry.

(*Music comes on*)

(*Perry freezes...nothing happens...*)

Perry: Well, thanks to our technical crew for that one. Welcome back to Perry, sponsored by Thighmaster Plus.

(*Applause man with "Sponsored by Thighmaster Plus". Turns sign around, other side says "Perry says: Cellulite, away!"*)

Perry: We're back, asking the question: is this man too bad to be forgiven? Let's take some more opinions from our live studio audience. The lady at the back, you've been waiting patiently. Tell us what you feel on this subject.

Mrs MC: As the headmistress of Orwell Park School in Ipswich, which I'm sure you've heard of...

Tammy: Yeah! (*Dead silence from rest of audience, stern look from MC*) Um, sorry, no, not really ma'am.

Mrs MC: As I was trying to say, I see it as important to live one's life as an example to other people. In my case, I have worked hard all my life to buy a house, maintain my status in society and pay for my children's education. I strive to obey the law of this land, I never get parking tickets, I never speed and I always switch off Jerry Springer. I always teach my pupils to live morally correct lives according to the principles of the 10 commandments. I myself am the churchwarden of my local parish church and regularly give a tenth of my earnings to charity. It's people like me that God is going to want in heaven.

Perry: But do we want her on our show?

Crowd: Go Perry, Go Perry

Tammy: I know what you're saying, Perry

Perry: Thankyou, friends...so tell me, Tammy, which I assume is your name – do you have anything worthwhile to contribute to our discussion?



Tammy: *(Still whooping)* Go Perry, go Perry...what, me? Erm, no. But I thought you paid me to be irritating like this.

Perry: No, obviously no one's told you yet. *(Goes back to centre stage)* Anyway, in part 3, we'll be seeing whether Danny can justify his actions. But first, I'd like to take one more opinion from our other special guest. A tele-evangelist of world renown, special advisor to Bill Clinton on spiritual matters, and fresh from his Bible Belt Bonanza tour – what have you got to say, Rev. Dr Robert (or do you prefer Bob?) Obadiah Brown?

Bob: The Holy Scriptures are clear on this matter – through many hours of study in His Word, the Lord has revealed to me that it is only those who are righteous before Him who will be spared on the Day of Judgement. The Lord has called me to fast for three days a week, to pray for an hour morning, noon and night. Why, I can even recite Amos to you..."This is what the Lord says: For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth. I will send fire upon the house of Hazeal that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad".

Perry: Yeah, thanks for that, Bob. Perhaps we could hear your opinion on whether your God can forgive a man like Danny.

Bob: Tell me Danny, do you fast as often as me, do you pray as long and as loud as I do, how many of the minor prophets can you recite? God has seen my righteousness and I will be rewarded for the way I've lived my life. When I get to heaven, you're not gonna be there.

*(Perry freezes as each character declares their opinion)*

Mrs MC: When *I* get to heaven, you're not going to be there.

Tucker: When *I* get to heaven, you're not going to be there.

Anne: When *I* get to heaven, you're not going to be there.

Jo: When *I* get to heaven, you're not going to be there.

Tammy: When *I* get to heaven, you're not going to be there.

*(The characters sit down, and we fade out of the chat show scene into a much more sombre mood. Danny steps down from his chair and kneels at the front of stage. His head is bowed and he looks remorseful)*

Danny: *(Thinking aloud)* When they get to heaven, I'm not gonna be there. *(Pauses, then starts to pray)* I'm sorry God, I know that my life is a mess and that so much of what I have done is unforgivable, and I know that I've never prayed and never read the Bible. But if it's true that you forgive those who come to you with a broken heart, then that's what I'm doing right now. Have mercy on me, a sinner.

Voice: I tell you the truth, this man and not the others, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.