**Location: Dayton, Tennessee, Courthouse**

**Grade: highschool**

**Required for College Class: Adolescent Psychology**

**Date: April 22, 2010**

*Field Experience*

 For my field experience I chose to observe teenagers in two completely different settings. The first place I observed teenagers was at a youth group at First Baptist Church of Dayton. The second place that I interacted with teenagers was at Juvenile Court held at the courthouse here in Dayton.

The main similarity between the teenagers that I observed was their ages, ranging from 13 to 19 years old. Other than that obvious similarity, there was not much else that the two groups had in common. They did, however, all seem to value their cell phones. One of the common punishments that the judge would give to a juvenile would be to first take away their cell phone, internet, and other pleasures of life. This proves that many adolescents idolize their cell phones, some without even knowing it like the teens at the youth group. Another similarity that I found that was less obvious was that the teens liked and often thrived on attention, especially from their peers. There was a boy at the youth group that appeared to me to be the leader of his group. He was in the front row, danced to the songs, and laughed loudly. I could tell he looked to his friends for approval, and when they gave it to him he exaggerated the action even more. A lot of the teens in court where there because they had been caught doing something illegal with friends. When the judge asked them why they had stolen or gotten in trouble, they blamed it on the peer pressure from their friends.

The element between the two groups that I observed was that they were both teenagers, but their differences are what stood out to me the most. There were several pregnant girls that I saw at the courthouse and also guys that had talked about sleeping around. The youth group recently had a weekend retreat called, “True Love Waits Retreat” where the whole weekend was about waiting to have sex till marriage. At juvenile court many boys had their pants falling down and the judge even told them to go buy a belt. At the youth group both the girls and the boys dressed conservatively. Some of their parents attended youth group with them and I could tell that the teens respected them. They also respected the college students that were older than them and their youth pastor. Some of the teens at the juvenile court on the other hand, were disrespectful to the judge, lied to their parents and one even punched his student teacher. Most of them had come from bad backgrounds and family lives, so its no wonder they ignored the advice of their parents or don’t trust adults now.

I really enjoyed observing the teenagers in these two settings. It showed how powerful the love of God is and how transforming it can be to an individual. My heart ached to see the teenagers at the juvenile court throw their lives away. If someone could just reach out to them and show them the love of God I believe they could start over with a new life and become a completely different individual.