

Joy

Taking classes pertaining to subjects I am passionate about; playing beach volleyball nearly every Sunday afternoon; engaging in funny conversations over breakfast burritos before school; studying abroad in 13 new countries I have never before visited; how could I *not* find joy in life when my college years have consisted of such wonderful activities? So many different aspects of both my educational and extracurricular routines have brought an infinite amount of joy to my life. I know this can only be attributed to God's faithfulness to me as I grow in my intelligence, relationships, and professional experiences.

One of the first sources of joy that I experienced at Westmont was in taking classes that pertained to the Liberal Studies major. Whereas in high school, everyone is required to take the same courses with little variation in schedules, college allowed me to tailor my education to what interests me most. I found that my passion for teaching only grew with my own studies, as each Liberal Studies class at Westmont seemed even more interesting than its previous. The joy I experienced in learning only pushed me to work harder in order to produce my best work.

In transitioning from classroom learning to observational and field experience, I loved working with kids and seeing my own education come to life within the classroom. Not only was it exciting to see a bit of my future as a teacher, but there is absolute joy in the laughter and sweetness that comes from working with kindergarteners. From some of these moments, I have learned important life lessons: the tiny, wooden kitchen is one of the best places to strengthen friendships; William Shakespeare and Martin Luther King, Jr. are two *very* different people, even if you do believe they look alike; we celebrate Dr. Seuss for his *books*, not for his *death*; there is no such number as "furteen"; rock, paper, scissors becomes infinitely more challenging when "rain" beats everything. Each memory invokes a smile, and rightfully so. Although a college education certainly proves difficult to achieve at times, my exposure to this professional field offers joy like I have never felt in my educational history.

The greatest joy, I believe, comes from the relationships I have been gifted with in the past (almost) three years. Tied to this joy are such strong feelings of gratitude, and at the expense of sounding cheesy, I am so thankful that God has placed me in such an incredible community of people at Westmont. I have experienced such freedom in simply being myself around others, and realizing that I am loved and cared for no matter what. My friends and professors regularly have my best interest in mind, and it is comforting to know that I am surrounded by like-minded people who love both me and the Lord so well. This joy can stem only from the hand of God. It is so evident how intentional He is in gifting me with each friend, professor, and mentor, and guiding me so clearly to the professional position that I am designed to fill.