

Student Work

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Gratitude List

Marta Vander Top
Dordt College

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Gratitude List

 [inallthings.org/gratitude-list/](http://allthings.org/gratitude-list/)

November 28,
2016

Marta Vander Top

Two summers ago, I lived with one of my best friends as we both travelled the country leading worship with my college's praise team, *The New City*. Whenever we had a free moment – in the morning, in-between worship sets, after brushing teeth at night – I'd see her scribbling notes in her journal. Because I'm nosy and couldn't resist wondering about what she was writing, I peeked over her shoulder and saw that she was keeping a list. Finally, I plucked up the courage to ask her what she was writing.

She opened her journal and showed me that she was keeping a gratitude journal. "I try to take time to think about the things in my life that bring me joy and that I am thankful for," she said. "Sometimes they are big things, and sometimes they are small. But the more that I write down, the more things I'm able to think of."

I have been practicing gratitude journaling for a little over two years now, and my list continues to grow and grow. Just like my friend said, sometimes they are big things and sometimes they are small things.

A few examples are:

#47 – Yoga with my roommate

#158 – Fireflies at Inspiration Hills

#346 – Time alone in the worship arts room

#472 – My little sister's laugh

#762 – Coffee at the Fruited Plain

#848 – Stained glass windows in Dutch cathedrals

#1227 – The way the light dances in communion cups

#1514 – Praying with my best friend before her wedding

#1679 – Mountains

#1705 – Subway giftcards

#2122 – Green tea fro-yo

#2137 – Learning people's stories at the nursing home

#2166 – The smell inside Panera

#2222 – Time alone in the sanctuary

#2298 – Washing my mentor's feet

#2406 – Live music

#2460 – Vegetarian sushi for lunch with my housemate

#2491 – Talking with my neighbors on the front porch

#2538 – Liturgical prayers

#2597 – The kids at Harbor Life Church

#2626 – Playing ukulele on Lake Michigan

#2718 – Bedtime chats with my roommates

#2998 – Mom and Dad supporting me wanting to go to seminary

#3018 – Pickles

As of today, I have 3,087 things written down, but the list only grows and grows with every week. Some days, the entries are very short and only contain simple things like “morning coffee,” and other entries stretch for over a hundred points.

I encourage you to take time to write down what you’re thankful for today. On a napkin at lunch, in a note on your phone, in a journal entry...make a numbered list of the things that you are grateful for. In the front of my journal, I wrote 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which says “Give thanks in all circumstances.” No matter what is going on in your story at the moment...no matter the pain, the sorrow, and the hurt, there is *always* something to be grateful for. May gratitude, joy, and thanksgiving be a permanent attitude that we maintain beyond the holiday season.