

*At the close of each production, we spend a few minutes in class the next week talking about the show and give a grace-filled critique. On these weeks, our devotion will feature a testimony from one of our students. This week, Nia Arevalo shares her STP experience.*

My STP story starts with me shoving a registration form in my momma's face and begging to start theater classes. I did this at every STP production we attended, and after every show, my mom would say, "Your father and I will talk about it." That was her loving way of distracting me from yet another frivolous hobby. But after much convincing and a carpool schedule with my five friends, my mom was finally on board. I loved my first show! The music, the dancing, the props, the crazy makeup, creative costumes, and complex set changes all fascinated me.

If I'm being completely honest, my first three years of STP were hard. I struggled with finding my place and a group of people that would accept me and my personality. Several of the friends that I came to STP with had pre-established relationships with other students and later switched classes. Whenever you step into a new season of your life and begin to discover an unfamiliar place, you have to decide whether or not you are going to be bold and reach out or wait for others to approach you. Establishing relationships can be scary. However, God calls us to fellowship with other believers and STP is a wonderful place to do that.

I had no idea at the time, but God was using that experience to teach me how to rely on Him. I learned to love myself and grow in independence. Don't get me wrong, friendships are a beautiful thing, and I am grateful for the relationships I have nurtured here. However, it is important that we seek our worth and validation in the Lord and not in individuals.

Several of my Directors and peers have assisted in strengthening me both as an actress and a Christian. Through STP I have learned to work with others, constantly pray through difficult situations, and speak up when necessary.

I am so thankful for the time I have spent at STP. I am grateful for the opportunity to TTA, and the platform it has provided to use my gifts to glorify the Lord. I encourage those of you who are struggling to fit in to be brave; start reaching out and talking to others. You never know what beautiful friendships might blossom.

**KEY VERSE:** Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. - Joshua 1:9