

Grace Christian Academy: A Journey of Faith and Discovery

Introduction: A Foundation of Faith and Learning

When I think back to the early days of my education, one place stands out: Grace Christian Academy in Phoenix, Arizona. This school was my introduction to learning, to friendship, and to the values that would shape much of my life. Grace Christian Academy isn't just a place where children go to learn academic subjects; it's a community, a nurturing environment, and a space where faith and education are seamlessly intertwined. For me, it wasn't just school—it was the start of a lifelong journey in both education and personal growth.

A Place of Memories: The Early Years

I began my educational journey at Grace Christian Academy when I was just five years old, starting in pre-kindergarten. At that young age, I didn't fully grasp the significance of what was happening, but looking back, I realize now how foundational those early years were for my development. The principal at the time, Dr. Somebody, was a figure of both mystery and authority. He was a part of an era where discipline was stricter, and his presence was felt throughout the school. He had an infamous wooden paddle, stored in a box labeled "The Coffin." The paddle was connected to batteries, wires, and switches—rumored to be an "electric paddle" used as a form of discipline. While it was never used on me (thankfully), it served as a reminder of the old ways of schooling.

But as I moved through the years, I witnessed a shift in educational policies across the nation. The era of corporal punishment was coming to an end, and Grace Christian Academy adapted along with it. The Coffin paddle remained on the shelf, never used, and became more of a historical relic rather than a tool for punishment. This transition mirrored the changes I experienced in education, as schools began to embrace more modern approaches to teaching and discipline.

The Science Fair: A Spark of Curiosity

The most memorable experience I had in my first year of school at Grace Christian Academy wasn't a lesson in math or reading—it was the school's annual science fair. As a five-year-old, I was filled with curiosity about the world around me, and the science fair provided the perfect outlet for that curiosity. My project was simple but innovative: I had taken a Tonka crane, a beloved toy, and added an electromagnet to it. This idea came from something I'd seen on Saturday morning cartoons, where the characters would use electromagnets to move metal objects.

At that age, I didn't fully understand the science behind electromagnetism, but I was excited to build something that could work. I spent days experimenting with the crane, adding the necessary wiring and power source to create a functioning electromagnet. When it was time to present, I was nervous but proud of the results. The project earned me second place in the science fair—a small but significant achievement for a young child. That moment sparked a lifelong love of science and engineering, and I can trace that back to the encouragement and

hands-on learning environment that Grace Christian Academy provided.

Grace Christian Academy: A Foundation in Faith

Grace Christian Academy has always been more than just a school for academics. It is a faith-based institution, and that faith was woven into every part of the experience. The school's mission has always been to offer a Christ-centered education, emphasizing the development of both the mind and the spirit. For me, this meant that my early education wasn't just about reading, writing, and arithmetic. It was about understanding the world through the lens of faith and morality, learning lessons that would guide my choices both inside and outside of the classroom.

This focus on faith wasn't limited to Bible classes or chapel services. It was present in the interactions between students and teachers, in the way we were taught to treat each other, and in the encouragement to always strive to be better. The principles of love, kindness, and integrity were a constant undercurrent that supported the academic teachings, making them more meaningful and impactful.

An Early Love of Learning

Beyond the stories of paddles and science fairs, Grace Christian Academy helped foster a deep love of learning in me. The teachers were dedicated to helping us grow not just in our academics, but in our character. Their commitment to education was matched only by their desire to guide us spiritually. I remember sitting in classrooms filled with colorful charts, posters, and books that inspired creativity and curiosity. There was always something new to explore, and the teachers encouraged us to ask questions and seek out answers.

Grace Christian Academy taught me that learning wasn't just something you did to pass tests—it was a lifelong journey. That perspective stayed with me throughout my life and shaped my approach to education. It's one of the reasons I've always believed in the importance of continual growth, both in terms of knowledge and in spiritual understanding. The foundation laid by Grace Christian Academy set me up for success in both areas.

The Community: Lifelong Connections

One of the most important aspects of Grace Christian Academy was the sense of community. The school wasn't just a place to go from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; it was a community of like-minded individuals who were all working together toward a common goal. The relationships I formed during those years have stayed with me throughout my life. Many of my classmates became friends, and I still remember the bonds we formed during recess, lunchtime, and after-school activities.

The school's faith-centered approach also created a sense of unity. It wasn't just about going to church on Sundays or participating in school Bible studies—it was about living out those values every day. Whether it was helping a classmate, working together on a project, or offering a word of encouragement, the sense of camaraderie and care for one another was palpable. I

learned early on the value of community and how important it is to surround yourself with people who share your values.

Reflecting on the Legacy

As I look back on my time at Grace Christian Academy, I realize how much that early education shaped who I am today. The lessons I learned, both academic and spiritual, provided a foundation that I've built on throughout my life. The experiences—whether it was winning second place in the science fair or witnessing the transition away from corporal punishment—were all part of a larger journey that helped me grow as a person.

Grace Christian Academy provided me with more than just an education—it gave me a sense of purpose and direction. The faith-based curriculum, the hands-on learning experiences, and the supportive community were integral parts of my formative years. I'm grateful for the time I spent there, and I carry those lessons with me to this day.

Conclusion: A School That Shaped a Life

Grace Christian Academy wasn't just a school; it was a transformative experience that shaped my early years and influenced my lifelong pursuit of knowledge. The balance of academic rigor and spiritual guidance created a unique environment where I could grow intellectually and personally. Looking back, I realize that Grace Christian Academy wasn't just about learning the ABCs and 123s—it was about learning how to live a meaningful, purposeful life guided by faith, curiosity, and a love of learning. And for that, I'll always be grateful.