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Former ESPN Producer Talks Faith and Sports with Taylor University Students

UPLAND, Ind. – Jason Romano has learned throughout his life how to incorporate his Christian faith into his career in the sports industry.

Romano worked for ESPN as a producer for 16 years before leaving the company. The current director of media at Sports Spectrum spoke to multimedia journalism and sport management students about his experiences on Thursday.

Growing up, Romano was not raised in a Christian household. “Sport was my god,” he said plainly. In high school, Romano decided to pursue a career in sports broadcasting.

It wasn’t until a year after Romano was hired by ESPN in 2000 that he became a Christian when his brother introduced him to Christ.

He said it took him a year to understand what he believed as a Christian. He told a few co-workers about his new faith but was mostly quiet about it.

After his conversion, Romano said he felt like he was living in two different worlds. In one, he worked for ESPN. In the other, he was growing his faith. He did not think he could merge the two.

Junior multimedia journalism student Samantha Saad said she found it interesting that Romano did not realize he could integrate his faith with his work. She did not know there were Christians who had that mindset.

“I think it was a really good reminder that no matter where you are, no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, God is able to bring you to where He wants you to be,” said Saad.

Romano’s view was radically changed one day at work when he met former Indianapolis Colts Head Coach Tony Dungy. An outspoken Christian, Dungy asked Romano what he did to live out his faith in the workplace.

“Coach Dungy’s day with us changed my life forever,” Romano said. He had never considered the question before and did not know if it could even be done.

Romano was encouraged by a co-worker to view ESPN as a ministry field by recognizing all the opportunities he had to engage with other co-workers. He encouraged students to bloom where they are planted and use their opportunities to shine Christ’s light.

Over the next several years, Romano worked to shift his outlook on the connection between his career and faith. “I went from being an ESPN producer who happened to be a Christian, to a follower of Christ who happened to be an ESPN producer,” he said.

Romano said after shifting his mindset, there was a change in how he saw his co-workers and his work. He started to view it as ministry. Romano told students that honoring God is doing your work with excellence and loving your co-workers, whom he referred to as teammates.

He realized he had become so consumed with climbing the corporate ladder that he had let his teammates down along the way. His mindset changed when he realized he wanted to serve his co-workers.

When asked if he faced scrutiny over his faith, Romano said people saw the way he lived and respected it rather than scrutinized it.

He told students it is normal to become friendly with those you work with daily, and the Bible reminded him to treat them well and love them where they are.

The way Romano incorporated his faith through small acts stood out to freshman multimedia journalism student Mallory Dotson. "People were able to see a change in him, which I think is really cool, even in just the small things," Dotson said.

Romano chose to step away from ESPN in 2017 because he felt God was calling him to do more. Sports Spectrum is a media company that produces content highlighting Christian athletes, coaches, and individuals in sports.

He thinks Sports Spectrum is an important outlet for individuals to share their faith. "For many of them, it's the most important thing in their life and they never get to talk about it," Romano said.

In his current role, Romano hosts the Sports Spectrum Podcast and has the opportunity to interview many Christian athletes and share their stories.