

Reflection #1: July 30 Session
“Why Values Matter” by Jan Stassen

The talk that resonated with me the most was Jan Stassen's "Why Values Matter." In his talk, one of the things that stuck with me was his project called "Museum of Values." When you hear that phrase, it really does not mean that much. A museum is usually defined as an institution that collects, preserves, studies, and displays tangible objects of historical, cultural, artistic, or scientific significance. Keyword: tangible objects. And as a naturally curious person, I cannot help but ask the question, “How exactly can values be collected, preserved, studied, and displayed?” At first, the idea seemed almost contradictory because values are abstract and deeply personal. However, Jan's talk was able to answer this most powerfully: by showing how physical objects, with their personal stories tied to them, can hold emotions that can give life to abstract values. In this way, these values become tangible in a way.

This changed the way I see values in my personal life. It made me realize that our values are constantly being influenced by our experiences, and that we express them not only through our words, but through the choices we make, the relationships we nurture, and even the memories we hold dear. Values are no longer just ideals we talk in theory, but rather something visible, relatable, and deeply humane. The talk pushed me to reflect on what tangible items in my life carry sentimental meaning and, more importantly, what values they represent. It also made me wonder: if I had to contribute to a Museum of Values, what story would I tell? What object should I choose that holds a piece of who I am? What value would I choose to share? I think I'd choose a worn-out teddy bear—specifically my big-sized, pink, and blind teddy bear. She is missing her two eyes, but she is still lovely as ever. It's nothing remarkable at first glance, but to me, it means everything. My mom gave it to me when I was little, and somehow, through all the phases of growing up, I never let it go. That bear represents the value of unconditional love; the kind that doesn't need to be flashy or perfect, just constant. It has been there in moments of joy, sadness, and uncertainty, quietly reminding me that I'm never alone. In sharing that bear, I would be sharing a story not just about childhood, but about connection and how a simple gesture from someone you love can stay with you for life. And if someone were to see it in the Museum of Values, I would hope they would be reminded of the people, even from long ago, who shaped their hearts, too.

The talk was a reminder that values aren't static; they evolve with us. They live through our actions and grow stronger when we share them. By connecting values to stories and objects, we make them easier to understand and more powerful in building a connection with others. In doing so, we turn something abstract into something we can feel, remember, and pass on. It is through these shared experiences that values become not just personal truths, but collective ones.