Knot or Not

- **Group size**: 2+ people. You can do up to around 30 at one rope. If I have many people though, I will often do multiple groups with about 15 people at each rope
- **Age**: 2nd grade to adult
- **Premise**
  - For the individual to decide (and be correct) if the pile of rope will make a knot or not when pulled straight and to secondarily to help everyone else in the group be correct as well.
- **Faith Development Objective**:
  - Seeing that there is objective truth regardless of what our opinions are or why we think what we do.
  - Experiencing and learning how to help other people grow in their understanding (and conversely, how not to)
  - Finding the balance between caring for yourself and caring for the larger group
  - It’s never too late to repent and admit when you are wrong.
  - Pascal’s wager
- **Facilitation Notes**
  - Take a rope and lay it in a messy pile in front of the group with both ends plainly visible
  - Give the group the following rules/objectives
    - You may not touch the rope (or use anything else to touch the rope i.e. sticks etc.)
    - Your primary objective is to be correct as an individual
    - Your Secondary objective is to help everyone else be correct
    - If you think that there will be a knot if we simply pull the ends of the rope you should stand on this side of the rope. If you think there will not be a knot stand on the other side.
    - You may not stand in the middle (thus being undecided)
    - You can change your decision at any time
  - Allow them to talk, analyze, etc, just don’t let them touch the rope
  - Occasionally repeat the two objectives and repeat that you can change sides any time.
  - After a while (ideally before they seem to come to a stalemate), and after ensuring that no one is in the middle. Have someone hold one end of the rope right where it is, and then you pull the other side a bit, but not all the way
  - This has given them more information to work with and so now allow them to continue their work
  - Once you think they are ready, pull it the rest of the way
- **Decompression notes**
  - Start with what their experience was: Were you right, wrong, surprised, etc?
  - What are some things that people did that caused you to change your assessment?
    - Keep an eye out during the activity so that you can ask specific individuals based on what you saw
    - What are things that people did that made you more likely to not listen to them?
    - Usually a good conversation about being specific, siting verifiable facts, establishing trust/knowledge/expertise, and kindness being helpful and ad hominem arguments, appeals to popularity, shame, and bullying not being helpful will follow.
  - Have people take note of what side they are currently standing on
    - People who are on the wrong side, why are they there? Have they been convinced?
- If/when they are convinced ask them why they are standing where they are. You repeated many times that you can switch at any time.
- Conversations about willingness to admit fault flow very well from this. This is a fruitful conversation with regards to interpersonal relationships as well as in our relationship with God.
- This also can lead into a conversation about Objective truth. There is either a Knot in the rope or there isn’t. What you think and where you are standing in no way changes that reality.
  - Pascal’s wager is another area you can move into from here. We all have to make a choice when it comes to our faith. The idea of avoiding the choice is by default a choice against a life lived with Christ. Like this activity, our choice to follow Christ or not is not a one-time choice and can be changed at any point.
  - Often during the activity, the participants will try to analyze you and appeal to the others based on if they think you would put a knot in the rope or not. This is one reason I often have two ropes set up, one with a knot and one without. I will often have them randomly choose one before the activity without any information or context and then use that one. When they start down this line of conversation, I tell them this. I usually don’t let the look at the other one, but you could if you like.

**Supplies needed**
- 1 rope
  - Any rope, webbing, string, or even an extension cord of most any length will work
  - The rope should be hard to follow all of the beds/twists. The harder it is to follow the harder it will be to gain certainty.
  - It doesn’t matter if there is a knot or not in the rope, the activity will work well either way
  - I like to separately daisy chain two pieces that are each about 15 ft long. One I put an extra twist in so that it has a knot and the other I don’t. Then I randomly give the group one of them. This is my personal flare and isn’t necessary.