Let The Church Be The Church
(Transforming lives together)

I. Introduction

A. Let the Church Be The Church

1. Quoting Missionary John MacKay
   a) Does this not sound like a echo from heaven?
   b) Where have you heard that echo before? Genesis 1:3 maybe?
      (1) And Let There Be Light and there was Light
         (a) Let there be a church and there was a church
      (2) We the church. are to be that light tp the world reflecting Jesus Christ
   c) Almost a repeat of Jesus' words and promise in Matt. 16:18.
      (1) "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"
      (2) "y sobre esta piedra edificaré mi iglesia, y las puertas del reino de la muerte no prevalecerán contra ella."
2. That quote is not in the Bible, but the concept is. It is called the Book of Acts
3. Let the church be the church is really a commissioning declaration
   a) A rallying cry that needs to be heeded again in our day
   b) Against the secularization and moral relativism of today
      (1) that keeps the church from being the church
      (2) But yet provides us opportunities to reach out to an unsaved world
   c) Our job today then is to follow the Spirit's example in Acts
   d) To take the church From His Promise to Fulfilling The Great Commission

II. Thank you and welcome

III. The Background of Acts

A. What is the Theme of Acts?

1. "Christ is the theme, the church is the means, and the Spirit is the power." —W. Graham Scroggie
   a) Acts is Faith In Action, Empowered by The Holy Spirit,
   b) Transforming lives,
   transforming the church into society,
   transforming unto the world

2. In Acts, believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear witness through the new church
   a) Bearing witness that it is the one true religion rooted in God's Promises
   b) Luke's aim was to show the church as the fulfillment of God's Promises
   c) The Gospel of Luke tells of Christ's ministry on earth in His physical body,
   d) Acts tells of His ministry from heaven through His spiritual body, the physical church

3. But the reality is that Every Christian needs to move out of Luke's Gospel into Acts.
   a) Knowing about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ is enough for salvation but not for Spirit-empowered service.
   b) The church is not simply an organization engaged in religious work;
   c) **It is a divine organism, the body of Christ on earth, through which His life and power must operate**

B. The Purposes, Occasion and Background of Acts

1. Luke's makes a stately introduction to His Gospel (1:1-4)
   a) Luke makes no idle claim when he state that he "carefully investigated everything" Lk 1:3. Bruce

b) He sought out reliable eyewitnesses
c) Used previous documents
d) His journeys are without error in geographic and navigational descriptions

2. The Acts of the Apostles throbs with life and action.
a) We see the Holy Spirit at work, forming the church, empowering the church, and expanding her outreach.
b) It is the most magnificent record of the Sovereign Spirit using
(1) the most unlikely of instruments, (us)
(2) overcoming the most formidable of obstacles,
(3) employing the most unconventional methods,
(4) **and achieving the most remarkable of results.** (McDonald)

C. The Distinctive Features of Acts
1. Its the only book that tells us about the ministry of the Apostles
2. The most distinctive feature is the speeches or sermons
a) Comprising about a third of the Book
b) Each one a witness to Christ presenting himself alive and speaking about the Kingdom of God
3. Journey narratives pointing to the missionaries being constantly on the move
a) With Faith in Action
b) But in action with a purpose as witnesses for Jesus Christ

D. The Uniqueness of Acts
1. Who would think of writing a history recount almost concurrently? No one else did. Just Luke. Why?
a) Because the Holy Spirit knew it had to be written concurrently showing it was therefore inspired
b) The Holy Spirit knew also that concrete concurrent historical facts supports faith
2. We would also be at a total loss without this book.
a) To go from the life of our Lord in the Gospels right into the Epistles would be a tremendous leap.
(1) Who were the congregations being addressed to and how did they come to be?
(2) Acts answers these questions and many others.
b) In reality, Acts is a bridge, a link not only between the life of Christ and the Christ-life taught in the Epistles,
(1) but it is also a transitional link between Judaism and Christianity, between Law and Grace. Perfectly setting up Romans
(2) This constitutes one of the main difficulties in interpreting Acts,
(a) that is, the gradual widening of horizons from a small Jewish movement centered in Jerusalem
(b) to a worldwide faith that has made inroads in the imperial capital itself. (McDonald)

E. **Literary Features**
1. The Book has various literary genres.
a) It has hero stories, adventure stories, travel stories, stories of miracles, and unending drama in the speeches given
2. We see a pattern over and over of
a) Christian leaders arising to preach
b) Listeners converted and added to the church
c) Opposition and persecution
d) And God intervening to rescue and protect the church

F. Acts Models the Spreading the Gospel

1. The Lord today continues to work through the lives of those who have dedicated themselves to be the instruments of God. You and I
2. **God could certainly use other instruments. He has in the past**
   a) **But at the present time, God has chosen to use human instruments.**
   b) As imperfect as they may be, yet that's what God has ordained to use.
      (1) Why? Ponder that for a few minutes
3. The exciting thing about that is, God will use me and God will use you.
      (1) What is so exciting about being used by God for His glory?
      (2) Ponder that too for a few minutes

G. What would we miss if we did not have Acts?

1. **We would certainly wonder how the church grew from Jerusalem to the point that Paul was writing to Christians in Rome.**
2. **We would have very little if any validated eye witness testimony**
3. We would not have some of the greatest verses in the Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit.
   At just the right time, in perfect context to the moment
   a) Acts 1:8 (Power and Witness when they were confused and powerless)
   b) Acts 2:38 (Repentance and Baptism)
   c) Acts 4:12 (Salvation in Christ Alone) No other name under heaven
   d) Acts 16:30 (One of the two most basic questions of the Bible
      (1) What must I do to be saved?
      (2) The other is Hebrews 2:3
         (a) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?
            It was declared at first by the Lord,
            and it was attested to us by those who heard,
   e) Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household
   f) Acts 20:24 (Endurance unto death)
      (1) The question therefore is: if Paul's life meant nothing to him why do we want to make Acts about the end of Paul's life?
      (2) Which leads us to the next point
4. **Giving a Date to Acts**
   a) Many point to the fact that Acts seems to have an abrupt ending with still unanswered questions
      (1) Possibly because it was written by Luke prior to Paul's execution, the persecution of Nero and the fall of Rome.
   b) But Acts is not a biography of Paul nor a complete history of Christianity in the 1st Century
      (1) But it does end positively by noting the Gospel has already reached Rome in just 30 some years.
      (2) A perfect lead in to the theology of Romans
         (a) Eye witness testimony supporting the theology of justification by faith
         (b) And eliminating condemnation for anyone in Christ Jesus
   c) But as I said a moment ago, Acts is not about Paul,
      (1) it is about the Holy Spirit of the Resurrected Christ empowering the faith of believers unto action
   d) My opinion is that Acts does not have a ending because Acts does not have an ending.
      (1) Today, you, we, I as the church are the complete ending

(2) And yet the church will be both blessed and judged
for how it carries out the Great Commission.
See Revelation 3 & 4 in Jesus' Letters to The Seven Churches

5. But there is one more key point to consider in the Book of Acts - Luke's Apologetic Intention and how it relates to us today

a) Dr. Craig Keener has called Acts largely a historical apologetic literary work

b) I would like to call it something a bit more simple

(1) Luke's orderly, personal testimony to Theophilus

(2) What we have seen and heard in Luke 1 and alluded to again in Acts 1

(3) Luke had the key-his orderly account of his personal testimony

(4) And Theophilus was the keyhole

(5) We tend to think of Luke's intention as apologetic history
just for the benefit of Theophilus

(6) But I think Luke wanted more than just to persuade or edify Theophilus

(7) Luke also wanted to reach the broader Greco Roman world
that Theophilus was connected to

(8) The Gospel was already in Rome but Rome was bigger than just Rome

(9) Luke wanted more. The Holy Spirit wanted more too

(10) Luke might not have been thinking about posterity.

(a) That is the job of the Holy Spirit and He does it very well.

(b) Evidenced by the fact we are still talking about Acts today

(c) But a personal testimony is one of the most persuasive methods of evangelizing that there is

(11) You many not know the Bible as well as you like to in order to evangelize

(a) but you do have a personal testimony.

(b) And our God is big enough to put you in touch with people
who need to hear your personal testimony.
I've seen it time and time again

(c) I encourage you to make an orderly account of your own personal testimony

(d) How did God save you and how do you know it is real?

H. The Final Outcome of Acts

1. Theophilus undoubtedly was instrumental in receipt of Luke's personal testimony by passing it on to the Greco Roman world.

2. We can see how the Holy Spirit propagated Acts, alongside the rest of the NT, by conquering a pagan culture and the most powerful empire ever

a) For in less than 400 years, Christianity
became legal, dominant and validated under Emperor Constantine

3. And this all occurred passively, by the power of the Holy Spirit
and the faithful witnesses who risked and many times gave their lives for the spread of the Gospel

I. Acts then is not just background

1. Today, we should not see Acts as just something from the past

a) but a present mandate and a roadmap for the church,

b) empowered by the Holy Spirit, to guide us until His Return.

**2. Transforming lives together through the church,
into transforming societies
unto transforming the world.**

3. **Amen**

J. Questions
   1. What impedes or helps the church today in modeling Acts?

   2. Why do you think God chose to use the church/believers to spread the Gospel when he used other methods previously? (Angels, prophets, nation of Israel.)

   3. How would you grade the broader church today in modeling Acts?

   4. What is exciting to you about participating in The Bridge's modeling of the Book of Acts?

K. Preguntas
   1. ¿Qué obstaculiza o ayuda a la iglesia actual a seguir el modelo que se presenta en el libro de los Hechos?

   2. ¿Por qué crees que Dios decidió utilizar a la iglesia —a los creyentes— para difundir el Evangelio, cuando anteriormente empleó otros métodos (como ángeles, profetas o la nación de Israel)?

   3. ¿Qué calificación le darías a la iglesia en general, en la actualidad, respecto a su capacidad para seguir el modelo de los Hechos?

   4. ¿Qué es lo que más te entusiasma de participar en la forma en que «The Bridge» busca seguir el modelo del libro de los Hechos?