

## WHITFIELD PARISH

St James' Church † St Luke's Church

### LIFE Group Notes w/b Sunday 1 February 2009

#### 'Your joy will be complete'

I wonder, what does the word 'joy' mean to you? One boy at Contact recently described it as 'a special type of happiness'. I can't think of a better description than that!

In the Old Testament, people experience joy in many ways: at the birth of a child; at celebrations and festivals, including weddings; when they enjoy good food and drink; when they bring in the harvest, and at lots of other times.

1. When have you experienced joy? Share one or two instances with the group.
2. Are there any common threads to the group's experiences of joy?

#### Read Acts 14.8-18

3. Paul tells his listeners that joy is a testimony of God's reality. Have you ever experienced a moment of joy – whether as a Christian or not – that somehow made you aware of God being near you?
4. What does it tell us about God that joy is a witness to his existence?

5. Acts 14 is an evangelistic setting. Could we witness to people in a similar way today? If so, how?

#### Read John 16.16-24

The joys of this life are a window on the joy of being in relationship with God. Jesus told his friends that the sorrow of the crucifixion would lead them into a joy that 'will be complete', which 'no-one will take away'.

This joy enables us to enjoy life, no matter what our circumstances; it erodes our fear of what tomorrow might bring; joy helps us endure hardship and suffering (see James 1.2-3). However, joy can grow dull. When this happens, we need to be honest with ourselves, with each other and with God, and ask him to 'restore to me the joy of your salvation' (Ps 51.12).

6. What causes our joy to become dulled? What could we do to share in the process of restoring it?
7. Do you know joy presently, or has it become dulled? What could you do with Jesus this week that would restore that joy? (Hint: it may not have to be spiritual!)