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"... His charmingly casual memoir-like sermonettes aptly illustrate the condition of the young modern Christian who embraces both [pop culture] and Jesus." —*Library Journal*

"If St. Augustine watched cable television and drove a Dodge pickup, one wonders if The Confessions wouldn't read like this." —Koren Zailckas, author of *Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood*

**Survivor: Panama's Austin Carty Joins Next Generation of Christian Writers with New Book *High Points and Lows***

Austin Carty, 28, is best-known for being "the Christian guy" on *Survivor: Panama*, and for talking openly about his faith during his stint on the show. Now he joins the growing ranks of talented young Christians writing about being a follower of Jesus in today's complicated world. His new book, *High Points and Lows: Life, Faith and Figuring It All Out* (Penguin/Plume, January 26 2010), is a candid, funny, and irreverent account of his fumbles along the way to adulthood, spiritual maturity, and an authentic faith.

With an easygoing, down-to-earth style, self-deprecating humor, and the knack of a natural-born storyteller, Carty tells

- what it's like being the "third most famous reality TV star in my postal code" (two *American Idol* stars, Chris Daughtry and Fantasia Barrino also live in High Point, NC);
- outgrowing an immature, self-righteous faith that centered on aggressive proselytizing and making sure that other people thought that he was a "good Christian" by doing things like making a show of not drinking at parties;
- failing miserably at an attempt to become a "flair" bartender ala Tom Cruise in the movie *Cocktail*;
- his analysis of the negative effect the TV program *Saved by the Bell* has had on the millennial generation, with its materialistic values and "Zach Morris ethos: that true fulfillment comes from other people wanting you";
- getting suckered into an insurance selling scheme as a naive college student, that leads to a reflection on how some Christians treat salvation as a pyramid scheme.

Carty also discusses what he learned participating in the grueling contest of *Survivor: Panama*. It's not just a game show, and not just a chance to win a million dollars. "Survivor is about pushing each contestant's back against a wall, pushing him into a place he's never been before and never wanted to go, a place where he wants to quit." That experience caused him to make some important concessions about himself, facing up to insecurities and fears he had long worked hard to hide:

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fear of not being in control, of not being liked, of not being as smart as he wants to appear.

Ultimately, Carty's appearance on a television reality show helped his emotional and spiritual growth and brought him to a new understanding of life, faith and meaning. It's an understanding that hits home as he deals with the death of beloved friend, recounted in one of the book's most moving essays, "Baseball and the Rhythm of Life."

He has come a long way from his shallow understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, from pretending to have all the answers, "from trying to paint a glossy finish over the canvas of someone else's pain and loss."

"Here's what I am slowly beginning to understand about Christian spirituality: it's not a debate. There is no argument—no words, no creed, no doctrine, no nothing—that is going to convince someone that the whole Jesus thing is real," Carty says. "Only the Spirit of God can do that. If God is not the instigator of the conversation then trying to convince someone about faith is like throwing darts at a brick wall."

"Here's what I believe now: There is no answer. There is only the promise of faith, nothing more. I have accepted the idea that I don't have to understand all of life's mysteries," Carty writes.

*High Points and Lows: Life, Faith and Figuring It All Out*

by Austin Carty

Penguin/Plume

\$14.00 paper

PUB DATE: January 26 2010

### **Here's what other young writers are saying about Austin Carty:**

"... funny, irreverent, and wise. If Carty ever starts his own denomination, I am so there." —Kevin Roose, author of *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*

"Austin Carty has a unique gift in Christian circles: he's refreshingly honest, genuinely funny and uncommonly humble. Here is the life of a believer — mountaintops, valleys and the occasional desert island. Christian colleges would do well by making it required reading for every freshman class. Faith is messy because life is messy. But it's a beautiful mess."

— Cathleen Falsani, author of *Sin Boldly: A Field Guide for Grace and The Dude Abides: The Gospel According to the Coen Brothers*

"I'm not sure if Jesus sat in a rocking chair drinking sweet tea as he talked theology, but maybe the Pharisee's would have loosened up a little if he had. This is sweet-tea theology, down home southern style, and whether you are a small town carpenter or a southern baptist preacher, you'll find a little something of God in here. No doubt, Austin's story will help many a lonely hitchhiker thumb their way to heaven."

—Shane Claiborne, author of *The Irresistible Revolution and Jesus For President*