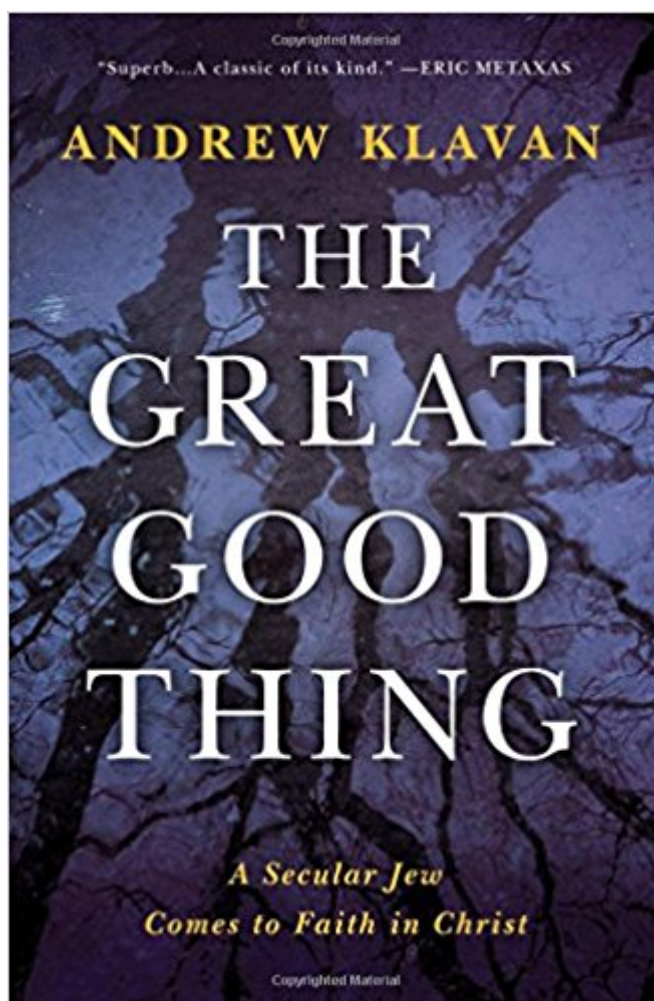


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The Great Good Thing: A Secular Jew Comes To Faith In Christ



Synopsis

Edgar Award-winner and internationally bestselling novelist tells of his improbable conversion from agnostic Jewish-intellectual to baptized Christian and of the books that led him there. “Had I stumbled on the hallelujah truth, or just gone mad—or, that is, had I gone mad again?” No one was more surprised than Andrew Klavan when, at the age of fifty, he found himself about to be baptized. Best known for his hard-boiled, white-knuckle thrillers and for the movies made from them—among them *True Crime* (directed by Clint Eastwood) and *Don’t Say a Word* (starring Michael Douglas)—Klavan was born in a suburban Jewish enclave outside New York City. He left the faith of his childhood behind to live most of his life as an agnostic in the secular, sophisticated atmosphere of New York, London, and Los Angeles. But his lifelong quest for truth—in his life and in his work—was leading him to a place he never expected. In *The Great Good Thing*, Klavan tells how his troubled childhood caused him to live inside the stories in his head and grow up to become an alienated young writer whose disconnection and rage devolved into depression and suicidal breakdown. But he also stumbled into a genuine romance, a passionate and committed marriage whose uncommon and enduring devotion convinced him of the reality of love. In those years, Klavan fought to ignore the insistent call of God, a call glimpsed in a childhood Christmas at the home of a beloved babysitter, in a transcendent moment at his daughter’s birth, and in a snippet of a baseball game broadcast that moved him from the brink of suicide. But more than anything, the call of God existed in stories—the stories Klavan loved to read and the stories he loved to write. *The Great Good Thing* is the dramatic, soul-searching story of a man born into an age of disbelief who had to abandon everything he thought he knew in order to find his way to the truth.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Thomas Nelson (September 20, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 071801734X

ISBN-13: 978-0718017347

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 371 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #82,445 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #65 in Books > Biographies &

Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish #474 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious](#) #2853 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Memoirs](#)

Customer Reviews

Andrew Klavan is an award-winning writer, screenwriter, and media commentator. An internationally bestselling novelist and two-time Edgar Award-winner, Klavan is also a contributing editor to *City Journal*, the magazine of the Manhattan Institute, and the host of a popular political podcast on DailyWire.com. His essays and op-eds on politics, religion, movies, and literature have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *LA Times*, and elsewhere. He lives in Southern California.

Edited: This ought to be a verified purchase review, but apparently has forgotten that I pre-purchased this for Kindle. I have been involved in Christian books for almost 2 decades (reading them for sure, but reviewing them, selling them, and interacting with them for the sake of others), and the gigantic flaw of most Christian memoirs is that they are simply and sort of dim-wittedly false. That is to say, they are too pure, too pat, too simple, too sanctified (or perhaps sanctimonious). They completely whitewash what it was to be a lost person before Christ, and they completely fabricate a life after finding Christ which makes it seem like those who are martyred are chumps for not following Him the right way. Those books, frankly, are a huge disservice to normal Christians because coming to Christ is nearly impossible if you are not starting from inside the Christian world, and once one is inside it is not an easy walk to die to sin daily and take up one's cross and follow. Books which say otherwise are lies -- a kind of religious porn which sets the wrong expectations for how loving God and loving your neighbor really works. I could continue to rant about those writers and books for 1000 words, but you are reading this review to find out if Andrew Klavan is another one of those charlatans or if he is the real thing. Let me not keep you in suspense: his book is the real thing, and he shines through it as the real thing. You can tell because what he does not do is to try to make his story into some kind of analogy for some religious paradigm of how a person is saved by Jesus Christ. He doesn't try to cover all the tropes the Top Men in Evangelicalism are looking for in a "Jew comes to Christ" story. He doesn't try to tidy up his life or the people in it. Listen: if you are looking for one book to read to discover what Christianity is really about, and you are someone who has never really met a Christian or you think that somehow Christians are some sort of impossibly-cheery darlings in spite of inheriting a great world religion with a 2000-year-old history,

you need to read this book to learn the truth about coming to faith in Christ. Even if it does not convert you or convince you, you will at least be disabused of the idea that the only way to become a Christian is to grow up homeschooled and sheltered from the world. Andrew, if you read this: there are so many of us who have stories like yours who are grateful for your transparency and simplicity to write this book. Thank God that He found you; Thank God you came when he called. Thank God for the story He baked into your life, and for giving you the artfulness to tell it to us.

How does a secular Jewish artist and intellectual from New York wind up on his knees before the baptismal font at age 50? The journey reads like an Andrew Klavan story, perhaps the best yet because it is the Andrew Klavan story. All of the narrative elements that fill his more than thirty novels and films (True Crime with Clint Eastwood, Don't Say A Word with Michael Douglas) become even more vivid in his first nonfiction book because we know them to be not only artistically profound but literally true--a strong male protagonist in the tough guy tradition struggles against not merely flesh and blood but also the principalities, powers, and the darkness of this world. Listeners to his daily podcast, The Andrew Klavan Show, always seem to ask variations on the same question: with the world going to hell in a handbasket, why is this guy always smiling? The answer, he tells us, is "the joy of my joy, the great good thing that a hesitant, even prideful three-word prayer won for him. Klavan credits "extravagant grace" for his spiritual awakening, but his rejection of hypocritical religion and secular hedonism may never have occurred without his own inborn and lifelong drive to tell stories that followed one simple rule: they needed to make sense. The stories never had to be realistic, as readers of his excellent and most recent novel Werewolf Cop will attest. But Klavan always demanded that they adhere to their own internal logic. And then he went mad. Klavan's telling of his own descent into suicidal madness and ultimate recovery constitute the book's greatest narrative achievement, as he coherently describes his own incoherence. But the book's most beautiful passage depicts a mystical experience with his beloved wife Ellen during the birth of their daughter. The memoir keeps in balance Klavan's intellectual and literary journey with his brilliant illustration of numinous, ineffable experiences, and this harmony leaves the reader with an impression often lacking in the genre: a broad, comprehensive view of spiritual conversion. The story's tumultuous course makes Andrew Klavan's trademark hope and humor seem at once implausible and inevitable. The boy who so viscerally felt the inconsistency of accepting bar mitzvah gifts when he didn't believe that he threw

them away, who forced himself over twenty years to read every book that shaped his culture so that he might at last make sense of his own story--how could he not at last come to believe in the greatest story ever told? The Great Good Thing is a masterpiece with profound insights for readers of all backgrounds, and it promises to inspire readers at any stage of spiritual, intellectual, and personal cultivation.

God put this book in my lap...not sure how else to explain stumbling across this book when I've never even heard of the author before. It is beyond touching how Klavan invites us into his own story on such a personal level. I hate to call it a testimony because ideas of proselytism immediately pop to mind, maybe there isn't a good category for this book; memoir seems inadequate. And truly the author isn't trying to convert anyone just sharing his own personal journey. It's raw, funny at times, ironically funny (shake your head funny), authentic, respectful, daring, and deep and thoughtful. Klavan has certainly mastered his trade as a writer. The words are beautiful, stirring, and clear; written artistry. My favorite line, "And I blurted at the windshield: 'Baptized? You've got to be kidding me?'" BLURTED - love it! I can picture Klavan hunkered over the steering wheel nearly nose to glass, eyes wide! Too funny! God does this to us sometimes; if He invented laughter He certainly hasn't abandoned causing a good chuckle! Thank you for sharing Andrew! Thank you for drawing us into your own story and journey. The redemption of the ugly parts is so beautiful, inspiring and hopeful.

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