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Good Grief

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Good Grief

Abstract

This is a film review of *Good Grief* (2023), directed by Rob Sharp.

Keywords

Death, Grief, Mourning

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Author Notes

John Lyden is the Department Chair and Blizek Professor of Religious Studies at University of Nebraska Omaha. He has been the Editor of the *Journal of Religion & Film* since 2011. He is the author of *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (NYU Press), and the editor of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* and co-editor (with Eric Michael Mazur) of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. He also co-edited, with Ken Derry, *The Myth Awakens: Canon Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars* (Wipf and Stock 2018).



Good Grief (2023), dir. Rob Sharp

Four women experience the death of a child: a stillbirth, a crib death, a death in utero, and a child hit by a car. Each of them hears the cliché responses: “I’m so sorry.” “If there’s anything you need...” “You can always have another one.” “You’ll be okay.” People mean well, but they don’t know what to say, and they often inadvertently say something hurtful such as suggesting that another child can “replace” the lost one.

In an allegorical plot device, each woman is also given a glowing ball to hold: the feeling of pain and loss embodied, which talks to them, suggesting that they can put this grief down anytime. “You can make it stop, and feel nothing forever.” “You can be happy.” “Get on with your life.” Like the well-meaning friends, the voice urges the women to move on from their grief—but they all realize that it hurts because they loved their children, and they don’t want to stop loving them. This is the price of love; “it’s meant to hurt.” With an acknowledgment of that fact, it is shown that grief is indeed “good,” and that they’ll be alright, even though the pain will never go

away. Remembering their children is painful, but in those memories, they experience both the love and the loss, and without giving up their grief they can accept it as part of their lives. This short film offers a simple yet beautiful portrayal of the ways in which we can face death without denial.