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How CBS' God Friended Me helped Javicia Leslie forgive her father



by Victoria Davis 22 hours ago [Follow @victoriadavid](#)

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Javicia Leslie, co-star in CBS God Friended Me, talks new episodes, her faith, and how being a part of the show helped heal a rift between the actress and her estranged father.

With 10.5 million views this month alone, CBS' newest dramedy, *God Friended Me*, has been declared one of the "unlikeliest of hits" for the fall season. But the series, which tackles the subjects of God, faith and social media, received a **full-season order** last week, proving the cynics wrong about faith-based network shows. Co-star Javicia Leslie is particularly thrilled with the news, believing the series has the power to not only inspire people, but also provide healing.

"A huge part of what I feel our world needs right now, is understanding that my connection to you isn't about a set of rules and laws that were given by a religion or government," said Leslie, who plays the role of Ali Finer in the show. "It's about a person-to-person respect. This show does an amazing job representing several different voices and I pray we continue to have the opportunity to shoot these episodes because the more we're here, the more we're going to be able to speak for people that haven't been heard."

It was the opportunity to be one of the people representing those voices that first drew Javicia to audition for the role of Ali. Functioning as both a sister and the pillar of wisdom when her atheist brother Miles (Brandon Micheal Hall) is suddenly Facebook friended by "God," Leslie says Ali was a character she really wanted to venture into, someone who served as a bridge in a disconnected family.

"I love the idea of psychology and the idea of understanding people based off their past circumstances," said Leslie. "That's really who Ali is. She kind of psychoanalyses the situations and more than anything she loves to help people. I also love the fact that this was a black woman who was a lesbian, which I feel like, to be a part of that movement on network TV, it's very powerful to me."

While the show's public message of human connectivity struck a chord with Leslie right from the start, she believes the most impactful experience she's gained from working on the series was the personal healing she received through the on-camera relationship between Ali and her father, Rev. Arthur Finer (Joe Morton).

"I grew up in a single-parent household, my mom raised me, and I really didn't have a relationship with

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my dad," said Leslie. "To be able to fall into this relationship and live into this relationship and have that father-daughter bond has been super powerful. When I'm on set, I'm living it with so much joy thinking, 'This is what it would have been like.'"

Leslie originally got into acting because of her desire to be, as she puts it, "about 20 different things," from a lawyer, to a dancer, to a teacher. Leslie figured that by becoming an actor, she could embody all the things she'd always wanted to be, including experiencing a real father-daughter relationship and, along the way, discovering that nothing is perfect.

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"I'm in a show where I get to have something I always wanted as a child, and what I took from this was that my real father may not ever be the father that I've always wanted, but he's there, he's human, he makes mistakes," said Leslie, who opened up communication lines with her father for the first time soon after beginning the show. "We can never go back in time, but what I can say is, 'I get it, you suck at the job but it's OK. I forgive you. From this point on, let's give it what we can give.' We don't talk a lot but we'll text each other here and there, and that's more than we've done in the past."

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In *God Friended Me*, social media and texting is used as a tool to connect people through "God" sending Miles "friend suggestions," for people he begins to notice and help in his day-to-day life. Rather than going with the popular stigma that social media accounts and cell phones are hindering person-to-person relationships, the series illustrates it as almost a launch platform for getting to know people. It's a "safe space" Leslie has recently utilized with her father.



"We might not all be ready to sit around a table and talk about things, but being able to sit behind your phone and your computer, if you're doing it in a respectful way, is just as powerful of a tool until you're ready to talk to people face-to-face," said Leslie. "I may not be ready to sit in front of my father, but to be able to send him a text message is just as powerful to me."

At the heart of this show is the importance of learning to communicate, openly, without bias or judgement and accepting people as they are. Leslie believes that, more often than not, it's one's own expectations of people that get in the way of being able to love one another. The actress has experienced this phenomenon not only as a daughter, but also as a Christian.

"People are who they are," said Leslie. "We're all different. But just because we're different, doesn't mean I have to love you any less. The difference between religion and faith is that religion is taught to us and faith is lived through us. I've chosen to walk with faith in Christ, but it's my choice. Religion is a lot of, 'Here's what you're supposed to do,' and what I love about this show is it goes away from forcing something to just living in something."



She adds, "All our characters are different religions and you'd never know it because we're all sitting in the bar and seeing each other for who we are. There shouldn't be a division just because I was raised differently."

God Friended Me's upcoming episodes are going to be delving even further into the personal lives of the Finer family. From Arthur learning to accept his daughter living the life of a gay woman, to Ali playing a bit of match-maker for her father. There's even going to be an introduction of the reverend's brother, played by guest star Malik Yoba from New York Undercover.

"Continue to tune in because as the show goes on, everyone's going to have someone they're going to be able to connect to," said Leslie. "Another thing this show teaches you is that you can't figure anything out by yourself. The point of friends and the point of family is that we're all a community and we're stronger together than we are separate."

NEXT: God Friended Me Episode 4 preview: Rakesh thinks he knows who the God account belongs to.

God Friended me is now streaming on [CBS.com](https://www.cbs.com) and Amazon Prime. What are you most excited to see in the upcoming episodes? Leave your response in the comments below.



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SEAL Team: Why Jason shouldn't make a permanent decision about work yet



by Alexandria Ingham 1 day ago

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SEAL Team Season 2, Episode 3 saw Jason put his children before his team. It made sense but Jason shouldn't make a permanent decision just yet.

During the most **heartbreaking episode of *SEAL Team***, Jason had a decision to make. Would he head off on the mission with Bravo Team or put his children first? He did the thing any good dad would do. Emma and Mikey came first. However, I don't think he should make a permanent decision just yet.

Right now, his children definitely need him. Kerri Medders' Emma said it all at the end. She was so certain he was going on the mission and was angry at him for that. That shocked happiness was all we needed to see to know that Jason definitely made the right choice (not that we didn't know already, right?). The fact his team also understood his decision hammered it home that Jason needed to step down from that particular mission.

It would be easy for him to quit his job right now. Everyone would understand, even if some wouldn't be happy about it. However, I don't think he should and I hope *SEAL Team* shows everything Jason is thinking as he weighs up all his options.

Thanks for watching and tweeting with us tonight. Sending love and hugs to all of you. ❤️

Where will Jason go from here? We'll see you next week for an all-new episode of **#SEALTeam**. pic.twitter.com/avz7qxUZii

— SEAL Team (@SEALTeamCBS) **October 18, 2018**

One of the worst things anyone can do during a time of grief is make a major decision. Experts will say not to get married, move home, start a family, and even change jobs. When you're grieving, you're not thinking straight. You tend to be tunneled into the thoughts you have in that moment.

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Right now, all Jason can think about is his family. His children only have him as a parent now and that's the only thing anyone sees. There's a lot of fear and worry. What if Jason doesn't make it back from a mission? What happens to his children then?

And they are all legitimate concerns, but there's also the thought of what comes in the future if he does leave. Some of these thoughts aren't going to be on his mind just yet. What will he do

instead? How will he feel when he's no longer grieving as much and is no longer in the field? Will his children be able to handle their dad being at home all the time?

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thank you for tuning into this very emotional & heartbreaking episode [@SEALTeamCBS](#) ❤️

from the bottom of my heart, thank you for the kind words I've received on Emma Hayes tonight. couldn't have done it without director Chris Chulack, [@SEALTeamWriters](#) & my on-screen family. pic.twitter.com/XIKnZH5QEZ

— Kerri Medders (@kerrimedders) **October 18, 2018**

That latter question you may laugh about right now, but his children have only ever known him in and out of the house. They've grown up with him away for long periods of time. It's their mom that has done everything. To have this sudden change with Jason at home all the time will be a major adjustment for all.

In fact, there are many relationships that don't work when a member of the Armed Forces returns home. Marriages break down and children and parents just don't get along. Throw in grief with that and it could set up a dangerous downward spiral for the Hayes family.

Jason understands the commitment that comes with being part of any kind of family. ❤️

[#SEALTeam](#) pic.twitter.com/9s0hvWQNtN

— SEAL Team (@SEALTeamCBS) **October 18, 2018**

Jason needs to take time off right now, but not make any permanent decisions in *SEAL Team*. His children need him right now but in a few months, things can drastically change. I just hope the writers have thought about all this—and considering they have [former Navy SEALs in the writer's room](#) at all times, I have faith they will have.

NEXT: Kerri Medders stole the show in *SEAL Team* Season 2, Episode 3

What do you think Jason needs to do in the long-term on *SEAL Team*? Would you like to see him seriously weigh up all his options? Share your thoughts in the comments below.

***SEAL Team* airs Wednesdays at 9/8c on CBS.**

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