

When God Entered the Set

Twenty years into their filmmaking journey, Matthew and Daniel Kooman talk with Paul Salfen about the 12-minute scripture takes, the family on set, and the holy reverence required to bring Daniel's defiance to the screen.

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine



Matthew and Daniel Kooman on set. Photo courtesy of The Epoch Times / Unveil Studios.

For the Kooman Brothers, the set of *Daniel and the Fiery Furnace* felt like family. Two decades into their filmmaking journey through Unveil Studios, Matthew and Daniel have learned that bringing a story to life is rarely pure fun once the cameras roll. Challenges arrive. Obstacles stack. Yet every morning they woke ready for the work. The biblical drama, which opened in theaters September 18 via EKKL Entertainment, stars Mena Massoud as the young prophet Daniel and Elijah Alexander as King Nebuchadnezzar. Produced alongside Travis Mann (executive producer of *I Can Only Imagine*) and Massoud himself, the film is the origin story of Daniel's early years in exile—the moment three faithful men refused a king's decree and walked into the furnace.

When Paul Salfen sat down with the brothers, the conversation quickly found the moment that still shakes them. Not every day on a biblical production lands with the same weight. One did.

THE LONG TAKE THAT STOPPED EVERYTHING

They were filming the sequence from Daniel chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar has dreamed a dream no one can interpret. The Magi face death—and Daniel and his three friends with them—unless they can both name the dream and explain it. In the biblical account, Daniel says only God can reveal such a thing. On set, Massoud and Alexander went toe-to-toe in takes that ran twelve minutes. “For those familiar with filmmaking, is pretty rare,” one of the brothers explained. Typical coverage chops scenes into angles, cut-ins, and inserts. Here the long, theatrical stretch of verbatim Scripture sat unbroken while the king answered in kind.

It was almost like this. This was like God entered the set and it was coming to life.

— MATTHEW & DANIEL KOOMAN

People on set began saying it felt like the actual moment. The weather outside responded. The mood in the room matched what the Scripture described. “That really shook me to the core,” they recalled, “because you want there to be an authenticity to the work and you want it to be like, it’s like fear and trembling... and then that actually happens and you feel the presence of God. That’s a whole other thing altogether.”



Elijah Alexander as Nebuchadnezzar and Mena Massoud as Daniel. Photo courtesy of EKKL Entertainment.

READY FOR THE LONG HAUL

Salfen asked what advice they would give someone who wants to tell stories like this. The answer was not romantic. “You need to be ready for the long haul. This project is three years running so far. And that’s, you know, we’re 20 years into our filmmaking journey and we’ve really asked God, like, what stories do you want us to tell? And following his leading... we’ve needed his presence and prodding and to be with us along the way because we’ve had so many obstacles and challenges to face.”

Any film carries pressure. A biblical one, they said, adds another layer of opposition. They felt it. They also felt they could not have continued without knowing God wanted the film made. One brother borrowed a line from his grade 12 social studies teacher: “If there’s one career you should never do, it’s film directing.” He laughed, then added that maybe that warning is what prompts a young person somewhere to pick up the cross anyway. The responsibility of telling a story people already know and love is real. It will affect them.

A MEDIUM POWERFUL ENOUGH FOR PARABLES

What keeps them on the path is the medium itself. Film has shaped them. “Once read a great commentary that said, if Jesus came in 2026, he’d be a filmmaker. Don’t know if that’s entirely true, but I think that the story medium is a way that you can reach people. I mean, he told parables. He told stories. Would he have had a film crew around if he came now? I think so.”

If Jesus came in 2026, he’d be a filmmaker.

— THE KOOMAN BROTHERS

Millions have already streamed the behind-the-scenes footage and trailers. The brothers believe millions more will see the film in theaters. Because the text is biblical, they approach it with what they call a holy reverence. “You want it to land in an authenticity that audiences can get behind and be excited about the biblical context. We’ve been kind of negatively impacted by some of the films that have been made based on the Bible, but not by believers or people that gave the reverence to the text, in our opinion. And so we really wanted to be different that way.” They speak of carrying a mantle forward—following filmmakers who have treated Scripture seriously and letting audiences feel excited about what God is doing.

WHAT THEY HOPE YOU CARRY OUT

Asked what they hope people take from the film, the answer stayed practical and personal. “I hope people will just look at their own convictions and test their faith. Where are they at with their own faith? And what are they willing to stand for and to know that there’s a God that’s there, that when you put your faith in him, he will get you through the hottest fire and that you can be refined even by walking through that fire. So to just stand for your faith and what you believe.”

There’s a God that’s there, that when you put your faith in him, he will get you through the hottest fire.

— THE KOOMAN BROTHERS

The story remains surprisingly relevant. Three men. One decree. A blazing furnace. A defiance that still asks every viewer the same question the brothers keep asking themselves: what are you willing to stand for?

FIND DANIEL AND THE FIERY FURNACE

In theaters now via EKKL Entertainment (opened September 18, 2026). Check local listings. Official site: daniel.movie · Tickets: danielmovietickets.com

Behind-the-scenes and more from the Kooman Brothers at Unveil Studios (unveilstudios.com) and UnveilTV. YouTube: [@Unveilstudios](https://www.youtube.com/@Unveilstudios)

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Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.