

*“Your greatest contribution to the Kingdom of God may not be something you do, but someone you raise.” ~ Andy Stanley*



Dear Woman of Determination,

The end of my first semester, junior year of college, I found out I was pregnant with my daughter. Two months prior, my family experienced the unexpected loss of my 17-year-old brother. You can trust and believe that quote was the furthest thing from the mind of a 20-year-old, unemployed, pregnant, grieving college student. My parents were very supportive, and I went back to school to finish out my junior year. As you can expect, life as I knew it felt very different. My brain had to process that the visions of my future had drastically changed- which did not include being a mother. The role of “mommy” was not part of my plan but was my current reality. Fast forward 22 years later I am the mother of two.

My daughter is a college student studying chemistry and making plans to attend graduate school. My son is a student-athlete, in his sophomore year of high school, on a path of extraordinary academic excellence. As a mother, I have always reiterated to my children that education gives you access to opportunity.

Looking back on my journey it has become evident to me that I was not saying that just for them I was also reminding myself. I continued to pursue education opportunities, but life did not seem like it was coming together. I completed my undergraduate studies when my daughter was two years old. During my final two semesters, I was commuting about 30 minutes to school with a full-time class schedule, working a daily part-time job, and four days per week unpaid internship. Upon graduation, I was offered a salary position to move from intern to account executive. Let’s just say I should have stayed an intern (lol)! Over the course of the next few years, I lived with my parents and worked multiple underpaid positions to provide for my daughter. I was offered a job out of state and accepted, leaving behind my only system of support in search of better opportunities and I began graduate school. I would take one or two classes a semester dependent upon the course.

Living in another state without any level of support forces you to become resourceful and resilient. For instance, if my daughter was not feeling well, I would call out of work for the day and go in during the evening. I would pack her up like we were taking an adventure! She would set up a fort with blankets, pillows, and toys under my desk. As she slept and played, I worked to meet deadlines. When my sick days were maxed, my parents would come to visit. My daughter and I eventually ended up moving back home to be closer to my parents. A year into returning home I became pregnant with my son. I quickly learned having two children is a game-changer. The way life had worked over the past seven years required some shifting. The financial impact was the most significant change. Childcare, household bills, car note, insurance, food, diapers, sports fees, medical bills, clothing, etc.- you name it that bill was coming in with my name on it. I experienced walking to my house, with my 8-year-old daughter and my son in his carrier, and my daughter because the status of my car note did not afford me the luxury of parking in front of our

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home. I had to make sure the mail was put away because my daughter could read and questioned why some mail came in the pretty pink envelope. Watching my one-year-old son run around the house in only a t-shirt because there were only enough diapers to take to the babysitter until I got paid again. When I think back those are the memories that pop immediately into my mind, but there were many challenges.

My journey may be unique in some ways, but not unfamiliar. We all have different journeys, but the same assignment. The experiences I shared were not due to me not having people to go to for help. I experienced them due to being prideful, embarrassed, ashamed, frustrated, and disappointed that I welcomed the same situation not once, but twice. God has restored me and proven His power in and over my life through favor and perpetual blessings. Never let circumstance write your story- it can't hear your heart. The power within us lies in the acknowledgment of our journey as we move toward embracing self-discovery.

Women of 4D is a manifestation of God's promises to me and the possibilities are endless.

Love,

Kadetra "Dee"