

## Part I.3-Are they all the same year model?

More than likely if you have more than one car then they were not manufactured in the same year. Each model comes with its unique features. A 2019 Mustang is quite different from a 1990 Mustang. The new 2020 Ford Fusion is quite different than the 1995 Ford Taurus. So it is with your children as well. The order that they were born determines a lot about why they act as they do. So now we have more things as parents to think about. Not only do we need to understand our temperament and our teen's temperament, but we also need to get a grasp of the personality characteristics of the firstborn, middle child, and last child. Don't worry; we are also going to cover if you have 5 teens and if you only have 1 teen.

Dr. Kevin Leman draws from years of study on the subject of birth order and came up with a unique tool to help parents with their teens. In a nutshell, Dr. Leman states that our kids act like they do because of the order they were born. He has spent over 35 years testing this theory out and is convinced it plays a significant role in the behavior of a person. I too, am a firm believer in this concept and see scriptural relevance played out in this concept as well.

There are many factors involved in the birth order. Just like how the temperament has more than one major temperament, so the birth order has more than one thing to consider. I don't want to get too detailed in our section here because that's not my purpose. Should you want to know more about the birth order concept please check out Dr. Leman's book, "The New Birth Order Book". It is readily available in most bookstores, especially Christian bookstores and Amazon. Some of the factors involved in the birth order are not only where is the child in that order but are they male or female? How many years are they apart? If there are only 2 children versus 5 children as well as are they an only child? Also, add in the dynamic of blended families and the equation gets even more challenging. For example, you may have 3 children, two boys and one girl with the girl being the last child. The girl normally has the characteristics of the last child but she may also show some evidence of a first/only child because she is the only girl. We will address this later but for now, just understand it's not so cut and dried sometimes. Now, if that girl who was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child in her family with last child tendencies now becomes a middle child in a blended family. What happens then? Most of the time they will retain their original birth order positional characteristic in a blended family unless they were very young when the two families came together.

**Let's have a little fun.** From the test below which list *seems* to have the *most* items that describe you and the way you operate? Understand that you won't fit every description in the list, but you should have a majority.

- A. Perfectionist, reliable, conscientious, list maker, well organized, hard-driving, natural leader, critical, serious, scholarly, logical, doesn't like surprises, loves computers.
- B. Mediator, compromising, diplomatic, avoids conflict, independent, loyal to peers, many friends, a maverick, secretive, unspoiled.
- C. Manipulative, blames others, charming, attention seeker, tenacious, people person, natural salesperson, precocious, engaging, affectionate, and loves surprises.
- D. Little adult by age seven, very thorough, deliberate, high achiever, self-motivated, fearful, cautious; voracious reader; black and white thinker; use "very", "extremely", and "exactly" a lot; can't bear to fail; has high expectations for self, more comfortable with people who are older or younger.

If you picked "A" then you are more than likely a firstborn in your family. If you picked "B" then you are probably a middle born 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3<sup>rd</sup> child or perhaps the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 children. If you picked "C" then you are probably the baby of the group and don't like that this course has no pictures for you to look at. (Just kidding). If you picked "D" then you are probably an only child. You are a lot like the firstborn but on steroids. The presidential debate of 1992 was between Bill Clinton, George H Bush, and Ross Perot. Bill Clinton is the 1<sup>st</sup> born and showed a confident suave look about him. He showed leadership and was prepared with

answers. George Bush is a middle child and flashed a more negotiating mediating style. Ross Perot is the baby of his family and was constantly asking embarrassing questions of his opponents which brought laughter from the audience. He was hard-hitting and very outspoken. You can find evidence of birth order in all people from all walks of life. If you want to have some fun, then take your list with you describing the character of the birth order in public. Observe how people are acting and talking. Then walk up to them and ask, "What child were you in your family?" "Were you a firstborn, middle child, or last?" You'll be amazed how often you'll nail your guess.

**Let's have some more fun.** Guess what birth order the following people fall into.

Billy Crystal, Eddie Murphy, Goldie Hawn, Joan Rivers, Danny DeVito, Drew Carey, Jim Carey, Steve Martin, and Chevy Chase. These people are... that was an easy one. (Baby, last-born)

This one might be a little more difficult.

Bill Cosby, Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Clint Eastwood, Chuck Norris, Sylvester Stallone, Oprah Winfrey, Geraldo Rivera, Rush Limbaugh, Dan Rather. These people are \_\_\_\_\_(answer: 1<sup>st</sup> born)

Let's do one more

Robert DeNiro, Lawrence Fishburne, Anthony Hopkins, James Earl Jones, Tommy Lee Jones, Roger Moore, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, William Shatner, and Robin Williams. The people are \_\_\_\_\_(answer: only child)

***The first group are babies of the family. They are all very creative, funny, a little mischievous, bold and not afraid to take a risk***

***The second group are 1<sup>st</sup> born. They are all perfectionists, strong characters, ambitious, and are known as great students (readers) of their craft.***

***The last group would be "only child". They are much like 1<sup>st</sup> born children (because they are), only on steroids. They had no siblings to learn how to compromise so they just bull rush right into things.***

***You, middle children, are probably asking why isn't there an example of people in your group? Mainly because you should have figured out by now you don't get any respect and are not important since you're not a 1<sup>st</sup> born or baby of the family. (I hope you know I'm just joking but that's how some middle children feel)***

Some of you will try to put your teens in the birth order box. You'll say because this teen is a middle child they will act like this. Or if they are the baby of the family the birth order says they will be like this. However, you will soon discover that some of your children don't act like the birth order they are supposed to be. "I have a middle child that acts like a firstborn". It's probably because one of the following has happened and a new "family" has started per se.

According to Dr. Leman, "**Spacing Can Create More Than One "Family"**". What does he mean by that? He means that typically most families try to space their children two to three years apart. Sometimes the next child that comes along could be more than 5 years younger than the child in front of them. This happens a lot to families that have 3 children and then comes along a surprise. The 4<sup>th</sup> child comes along 5 or more years later and a new "family" can start. In other words, the 4<sup>th</sup> child now may have some 1<sup>st</sup> child tendencies because of the spacing. There is a big "however" though. The values and discipline of the parents can in many cases curtail the spacing issue. Depending on how much personal time they afford each child. If you have a 15-year-old, a 13-year-old, and a 3-year-old then the 3-year-old can take on tendencies of the 1<sup>st</sup> child

because of the gap as well as his ability to learn and follow a much older group of siblings skill set. On the other hand, if mom and dad, as well as the older siblings, continue to emphasize the baby of the family as a "baby", then he'll continue to show the characteristic of the last child.

Now here's an example that will probably make you even more confused. Let's say you have John a 21-year-old, Steve a 17-year-old, Susan a 14-year-old and Bailey a 4-year-old. Notice the gap between Steve and Susan. She was the baby of the family for 10 years before Bailey was born. Susan's now 14 years old. She doesn't just immediately drop the baby of the family traits because another comes along 10 years later. Also, because Bailey was born 10 years after Susan then Bailey can either take on the traits of the baby or the 1<sup>st</sup> born depending on how he was raised and learned from his siblings. My point is that in this scenario the 3<sup>rd</sup> child could have the "baby" of the family tendencies and the last child could show more maturity and have 1<sup>st</sup> born tendencies because of the **Spacing issue. Hopefully, your kids are nicely spaced apart and it won't be so hard to identify their tendencies.**

Another reason that your child might not show evidence of their birth order is the sex of the individual. For example, if there are 3 children and the first two are girls and the last is a boy then the boy is also the "firstborn" male. Therefore he possibly could take up characteristics of a firstborn as well as being the baby.

Here's something else to consider. If mom and dad were firstborn in their families then they probably have a perfectionist attitude with high standards and a critical eye. If there are three girls with the following:

Female 16

Female 14

Female 12

Then the first child is going to have it pretty rough. She's going to run interference for the second and third child because she'll absorb a lot of the critical eye that mom and dad have. The point according to Dr. Leman is that parents who are authoritarians and come down too hard on the first child could find that Female 16, as they get older could rebel. Instead of excelling in school which is what a firstborn normally does, they mess up and start making bad grades as a way to get back to the parents through a passive-aggressive nature. **"In any family, a person's order of birth has a lifelong effect on whom and what that person turns out to be."** Quote from Dr. Kevin Leman.

**What about a Biblical illustration of the birth order? Let's take look at Esau and Jacob.**

*The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.*<sup>26</sup> *After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.* **Gen. 25:25.**

**So Esau was older than Jacob by birth even if only a few minutes. Now notice the characteristics of each.**

*The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents.*<sup>28</sup> *Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*<sup>29</sup> **Gen. 25:27.**

**Notice anything different about the two boys and the parent's preferences? Why would they like one over the other? We'll see from the story that parental preferences lead to deception.**

*Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished.*<sup>30</sup> *He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright. "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me? But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to*

***Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright. Gen. 25: 28-34***

Now, look at what's going on. Could the younger one be conniving and manipulating for something bigger down the road? He took advantage of a firstborn weakness. Firstborns don't see the big picture sometimes because of their drive and ambition. That leads to being naïve which allows them to be taken advantage of. I also see the characteristics of the last child. These children can be manipulative while at the same time show great "salesman-like skills to get what they want. I see both of those taking place in the passage above.

### **Now for the kicker!**

In Genesis 25 we saw how Jacob stole Esau's birthright and now in Genesis 27, we see how he stole his lifelong blessing from his father Isaac. The blessing was to go to the oldest which is what was about to take place. Isaac, the father, was on his last days and wanted to pass on his blessing to his son Esau. So he told him to go and kill some game and then cook what he killed and bring it to him so he could eat and then bless Esau. Rebekah, the mother, and wife of Isaac heard the conversation. She wanted Jacob to receive the blessing so she devised a plan to fool Isaac by having Jacob prepare the stew from meat that was already at the house. Since Esau was a hairy man they would have to fool Jacob by putting the hair from an animal all over his arms in case he touched him. Now you have to remember that Isaac was pretty much blind at this time and couldn't see. The scriptures say,

***Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied. Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not." Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."<sup>23</sup> He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him.<sup>24</sup> "Are you my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate, and he brought some wine and he drank.<sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him***

Do you see any deception going on here or lying and manipulating? These are all characteristics of the last child. It makes me think Rebekah might have been the last child as well. Well, this part of the story ends with Isaac blessing Jacob and poor Esau shows up too late and gets left out. You see, once the Patriarch gives his only blessing he can't take it back. Look at how the last child just literally did a knock-out punch for his older brother.

***Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!" When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father! But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?" Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"***

Kind of makes you feel sorry for Esau doesn't it? Jacob continued to be a manipulator in his life but he also became a man who was willing to wrestle stubbornly for his faith. This example in scripture is just one of

many where you can identify character traits of the birth orders. If you want to have some fun, try guessing the birth order of some of Jacob's sons. You can also do this with the disciples with those who were brothers.

**So let's look more closely at each order of birth.**

## **THE FIRSTBORN**

Firstborn usually show the following characteristics in their life. They tend to be conscientious, well organized, serious, goal-oriented, achiever, and believers in authority. They are perfectionist reliable, critical, self-sacrificing, conservative, a supporter of law and order, legalistic, and self-reliant. From these descriptors for a firstborn can you start seeing where they might fall in temperament? There are two types of temperament for example that show signs of being a perfectionist who is driven. One is a choleric and the other is a Melancholy. A firstborn can have temperaments of both because of the training they received from their parents. Who by the way maybe firstborn themselves.

Firstborns tend to be very good students and good workers because they started with a very strong need for mom and dad's approval. They also have numerous other individuals who help shape the behavior of a firstborn. Teachers, coaches, and bosses also received a positive experience with a firstborn because they need those people's approval. **Firstborns love to be exacting-precise, and picky.** Often you'll find lots of editors and accountants type people are firstborn. They are typically analytical and love to ask questions.

Fun question: If you remember the Smothers Brothers and their act, which brother in the act seemed to be the oldest? Which brother is the oldest? I'm sure you guessed it already, Tommy is the oldest. Behind the scenes, he was a take-charge kind of guy. Dickie would say he moved to the other end of the country just to get away from Tommy's "controlling nature".

Finally, firstborns are serious people and take on a nurturing nature. They grow up faster than their siblings and take on more grown-up characteristics. Think about it, their role models were mom and dad, aunt and uncle, and other adults who had some kind of responsibility for raising the child. They become leaders and achievers. Did you know that over 56% of firstborns have been President of the U.S? You know how many "babies" or last child have become president? Only THREE have made it to the White House. Perhaps the last child just couldn't find the White House.

On the negative side, firstborn tend to remember more negative aspects of their life than positive. You'll consistently hear a firstborn say that his younger brother and sisters got away with murder. They are in some way the guinea pig when it came to discipline. After all, this is the first time in their life that mom and dad had to discipline a rebellious nature and they learned as they went along on how to discipline rather than punish. Firstborns put a lot of pressure on themselves to perform for others. Notice according to Dr. Leman the strengths and weaknesses of a firstborn and then compare to the 4 temperaments. You'll find that firstborns usually fall into 2 major traits. It's pretty interesting.

<b>First Born</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	Leadership-take charge, knows what to do Confident-Others want to follow such a person Cooperative, easy to work with on projects Perfectionist. It doesn't leave any stone unturned	Can come off as overbearing or aggressive Too insensitive and selfish Naive, can be taken advantage of sometimes Tends to be too critical of self and others.

Organized, always has things in its proper place  
Strong drive and ambition  
Very goal-oriented  
Very logical and a straight thinker  
Veracious reader and factfinder

Worries too much  
Stresses out people too much  
Doesn't see the big picture sometimes.  
Believes they are always right  
Can't see the humor in things

Compare all of the firstborn traits with the temperaments and it will give you a clue as to not only how to relate better with this person but it will help you understand why they talk and act as they do.

You want to know if you or your teen is a perfectionist. Put a "0" for never, a "1" for seldom, a "2" for often and a "3" for always. Then add up your score and see where you fall.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do mistakes-your own or others-irritate you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you feel that everyone should be driven to do their best as you are?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you use the word *should* a lot-as in "I should have taken care of that" or "we should meet on this immediately.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you find it hard to enjoy success? Even when something goes well, it's easy for you to find the things that could have been just a little bit better.

\_\_\_\_\_ Does one small mistake ruin your day-or at least your morning?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do terms like *good enough* and *just about right*, bother you, particularly on the job?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you tend to put things off because you're not quite ready to do the job right?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you find yourself apologizing for certain work because you could have done it better if you would have had more time?

\_\_\_\_\_ Whether in a meeting, working with a team, or in a group situation in the workplace, do you prefer to be in control of what's happening?

\_\_\_\_\_ Realizing your deep need for having all your ducks in a row, do you insist those around have their ducks in a row just like you? (Think exactly as you do)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you tend to see the glass half empty rather than half full?

Scoring:

11-16 means you're a mild perfectionist

17-25 means you're a medium perfectionist

26-33 means you're an extreme perfectionist (you're too hard on yourself and everyone around you)

## So what's wrong with being a "perfectionist"?

From the negative side, perfectionists tend to be very critical people. They often see the flaw of the detail rather than the intent of the heart. Thus, they tend to hurt people's feelings or frustrating people. If you're a perfectionist parent then you are in danger of frustrating your teen or pushing away your teen emotionally from you because they'll feel you can't accept them as they are. Accepting love from a perfectionist parent becomes "conditional" in their eyes and not unconditional.

One final note, if you or your teenager have strong perfectionist tendencies then you need to be aware studies show depressive attitudes can set in due to never feeling satisfied. Perfectionists, believe it or not, deal with a lot of guilt by judging themselves according to what others think. **A perfectionist would rather suffer than take steps to change things. There is a big difference between being a perfectionist and a person of excellence.** Perfectionists base their value on **accomplishments. They have to perform or else.** Seekers of excellence base their value on simply who they are. **Perfectionists** are easily dismayed and disappointed and will often throw up their hands and quit when they can't get it perfect. **Seekers of excellence** may get disappointed and hurt by a setback but they don't give up like a perfectionist. **Perfectionists** see failure as bad while **seekers of excellence** see failure as a learning opportunity. **Perfectionists** hold on to mistakes forever and let it gnaw on them for long periods while **seekers of excellence** let go of mistakes as quickly as possible and hardly ever take it personally. **Perfectionists** hate or hide from constructive criticism while **seekers of excellence** welcome constructive criticism so they can learn how to be better. Finally, **perfectionists** have to win to maintain high self-esteem while **seekers of excellence** can finish in second, third, or even last and still feel good about who they are.

## So how do you control perfectionism by seeking excellence?

1. **Take perfectionism seriously.** Perfectionists are very proud people and have a hard time accepting they have a problem. This is a serious problem and should be treated as such. The Bible says,

***"He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." Prov. 10:17.***

It takes discipline to move away from a perfectionist attitude. When a perfectionist refuses to take their problem seriously then they can lead others astray by making those who are in contact with them develop negative and rebellious attitudes toward them.

2. **Make a conscious effort to go easy on criticizing yourself and others.** Go easy on others first. Realize that when you criticize yourself or others you are hard on the deed and not the doer. The doer feels like you are criticizing them for who they are and not what they have done. A critical spirit will wound many hearts. The Bible says, ***"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."* Prov. 11:25.** This doesn't refer only to physical needs but emotional needs as well. When a perfectionist learns to be generous with his words in the right way then he will not only refresh those who are around him but he will feel like he is doing something worthwhile. The Bible also says, ***"A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly."* Prov. 14:29.** Most perfectionists don't show any patience with people. They may feel like they are always right because they are so keen on what needs to be done, but their critical spirit and frustration towards others' lack of "perfection", makes them look quite silly in the eyes of people.
3. **Have the courage to admit out loud, "I was wrong".** This is the most difficult thing for a perfectionist because admitting the wrong means you failed, and that's not perfect. You might as well add a couple more words since you've gone this far. You should add, "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?" When a perfectionist can let the Holy Spirit move in their life where these words are common then they will grow tremendously and will start moving away from perfectionists tendencies. Scripture

says in James 5:16 **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed...”** Learning to deal with our pride and confessing our sin to one another is a great sign of maturity even though the average person would see this as a sign of weakness. However, it’s awfully hard to stay mad at someone who is truly repentant and sorry for their actions. It’s much easier to forgive a perfectionist when they work on matters of the heart.

**4 other things a perfectionist can think about.**

- a. Expect less of yourself**
- b. Become skilled at saying no**
- c. Work on becoming an optimist**
- d. Get rid of grudges**

**What about the "Lonely Only" child? (Firstborn and of course only child)**

Since only children don't learn from siblings the need to compromise they tend to be ultra-perfectionists. They take on the same characteristics of a 1<sup>st</sup> born but on steroids. When they don’t get their way they get very frustrated, not because of selfishness but because it's not going to be done right without their input. Only children often have to fight depression because they cannot live up to their standards. An only child will frequently overcommit themselves because they have a hard time saying "no". Since they get overextended they don't do as good of a job as they would have liked, thus guilt kicks in and you have a frustrated only child. Only children hate to be criticized and they will go to extreme measures to make sure that doesn't happen. Below you will find some traits about only children from Dr. Leman’s book, “The New Birth Order Book.”

<u>Typical Trait</u>	<u>Strength</u>	<u>Weakness</u>
<i>Confident, self-assured</i>	<i>Trusts own opinion, not afraid to</i>	<i>Maybe self-centered from making decisions treated by parents as "center of the universe", fearful trying new things</i>
<i>Perfectionist</i>	<i>Always do things right and leaves no stone unturned to do a thorough job</i>	<i>Tend to criticize themselves and or others too much, never satisfied; procrastinates since they fear it won't be good enough</i>
<i>Organized</i>	<i>Have everything under control</i>	<i>May worry too much about order</i>
	<i>always on top of things and tend to be on time</i>	<i>Not very flexible, impatient time doesn't like surprises.</i>
<i>Driver</i>	<i>Ambitious, enterprising willing to sacrifice in order to be a success</i>	<i>Put themselves or those who they work energetic, with under too much stress and pressure</i>
<i>List maker</i>	<i>Sets goals and makes them, tends to get more done in a day. than others</i>	<i>May become boxed in and too busy with the to-do list and not the big picture</i>
<i>Logical</i>	<i>Known as straight thinkers, can be counted on, not compulsive</i>	<i>May believe they are always right and fails to pay attention to other opinions</i>



## I never did get any respect- A Look at the Middle Child

Middle children oftentimes feel ignored, left out, and even insulted. Middle children and 2<sup>nd</sup> born have a lot in common. Middle children learn from their older siblings. If the older sibling is stronger and smarter (only through experience, not IQ), then they usually branch off and go in a different direction. That is why Dr. Leman says "the middle child can be a mystery". However, if the middle child senses that they can compete with the 1<sup>st</sup> born then he can take on almost a "role reversal" with the older sibling. The middle child is either a pleaser or an antagonist. He may take on the role of the victim or the martyr. All of this is determined by how the middle child responds to the oldest child. The traits of the middle child can be all over the map. They are the hardest ones to figure out. Most parents have thousands of pictures and movies of the firstborn. The second-born has its share of pictures but it's usually not anywhere near what the 1<sup>st</sup> born had. Therefore, they start developing an attitude of "I get the short end of the stick".

**Middle born children usually work hard at having lots of friends.** They do this because they often feel left out at home with the 1<sup>st</sup> born and last born getting most of the attention, (in their eyes). Therefore, **friends are very important to a middle child.** In their mind, the 1<sup>st</sup> born is special because they were first and the last born is special because they are the baby and the end of the line. They feel they are just trapped between the two and sometimes they feel "in the way: while around the family. When they hang around their friends they are "special" and not like what they think they are at home.

Most people who study human behavior have concluded that we all operate according to three main motivations.

1. We want to obtain recognition or reward
2. We want to avoid pain or danger
3. If offended, we want to get even or see justice is done.

Taking that premise you can see why the middle child will often prefer to hang with friends than family because they don't feel they get recognition, or they are reminded painfully that they are just the "middle" child with no special attributes. Most parents are appalled to hear their middle child often thinks this way. **Parents must go out of their way to make sure the middle child does not feel unwanted. They must make sure there is equal time being spent honoring and recognizing their accomplishments. Otherwise, the middle child will find it with their friends which could lead to some forms of rebellion. Justice in the mind of a middle child is causing a little trouble in the home.**

That is why when you study middle children across the board to avoid "pain" they often are the ones that leave the family first or live farthest away as a young adult. The 1<sup>st</sup> child is usually the one who stays close to home due to their "responsible" nature of taking care of the parents. Here are the results of a study by Dr. Leman about Middle Children.

1. *They are more of a closed book than an open one. In other words, they are more secretive than the other children in the home. They don't confide in very many people. Due to their secretive nature, they can have communication issues which can be difficult during the marriage.*
2. *They are likely to be independent and mentally tough.* They are the hardest ones to ask for help. Their stubborn nature can get in the way of productivity.
3. *Teenage middle children often will run with the pack.* The middle born has a deep need for being accepted and the teen pack meets that need. That's why parents must make sure the crowd that the middle child runs around with is the right kind of crowd. It's easy for middleborns to get in trouble more than the other children.

4. *They are likely to be the most faithful marriage partner.* Middle children are loyal due to how they felt growing up. They are far more prone to stick to their commitments.
5. *Middle born children are embarrassed easily.* They may embarrass easily but they also won't admit that they were embarrassed.

Here's a great statistic. Studies show that middle children are far less likely to need or go to counseling than 1<sup>st</sup> borns and last borns. In our lingo, middleborns don't have as many hang-ups as their siblings. Middle children have to learn how to negotiate, how to compromise, how to handle disappointment more than other children. Those are great strengths to have. Here are some strengths and weaknesses of the middle child.

Middle children often will have Phlegmatic or Melancholy traits.

### **Middle Born Strengths**

Learned not to be spoiled.

Relationships are important, make friends easily

Willing to do things differently, take a risk,

Knows how to get along with others, negotiates

Peacemakers, willing to work things out.

Can be trusted with a secret, sensitive

### **Weaknesses**

Maybe rebellious because they don't feel like they fit in.

Friends can be too important and not offending them may cloud their judgment.

May appear to be bullheaded, stubborn

Can be seen as willing to have peace at any price, others may try to take advantage of them.

Hate's confrontations, will often not share their true feelings and opinions.

May fail to admit when they need help because it's just too embarrassing.

## **Born Last but Seldom Least- A look at the baby of the family.**

This part is personal to me since I was the baby of the family. If you are a last born you probably scanned all the information before this section quickly because you wanted to get to the section that talked about you. Last born children learn very early in life that they have to do something out of the ordinary to be noticed. Their older siblings have already accomplished much in life and comparing the youngest to the others is usually a losing proposition. Therefore, many of your last borns have a mischievous bent toward them. They don't believe people take them seriously even though they have a strong desire to be heard. There is truth to the concept that parents get "taught out" by the time the last one comes along. They rely heavily on the siblings to teach and many times that's the last thing the sibling wants to do. I know from my own experience as the baby that there were many times I was taught by my siblings not quite the way I'm sure my parents would have wanted me to learn. They assumed I was being properly taught on how to take care of the animals but little did they know that my older brother was always encouraging me to do something sadistic to an animal. To protect my innocence I will not spend any time telling you how I would try to catch certain animals on fire, however, I will let you know I still don't like cats.

Last borns are real charmers and can use their people skills to get far in life. Most last borns are not the greatest students. Why? They spent too much time being the class clown to get the attention they felt they were robbed of at home. Last borns live for praise and adoration as well as encouragement. If you're a teacher then you'll notice the last borns. They are the ones that secretly make you laugh as you tell of their antics in the teacher's lounge while in the classroom they drive you crazy. On the negative side of things, last borns can be emotional time bombs. One minute they can be charming and full of energy and the next they can be depressed and sullen. It all depends on how they view their circumstances. Last borns tend to want to show people that they can do it even when others don't believe they can. They develop an "I'll show them" attitude. They are very prideful people and can hold grudges. Below are some of the strengths and weaknesses of the last born.

Last born children will frequently have some Sanguine temperament traits in them, unless, of course, there was the spacing of age between their next closest sibling. Then they might have some Choleric in them.

### Last Born Strength

They are likable, fun to be around and easy to

They read others well and know how to work well one on one or in a larger group. Relates well  
Social settings are their cup of tea.

Keeps on coming with tireless persistence, taking "no" for an answer.

Caring, loving, wanting to help. Likes to get strokes and to give them.

They appear relaxed, genuine, and trustworthy focus

Entertaining and funny and know how to get noticed

### Weakness

Manipulative, even a little flaky, seeming to talk to a little too slick and unbelievable.

May come across as undisciplined, prone to talk too much and too long. The kind that talks a good game but can't always produce.

May push too hard because they only see things not their way.

They can be gullible and easily taken advantage of. Makes decisions on feeling and not fact.

May appear to be absent-minded, a little out of

May appear to be self-centered, unwilling to give others credit, having a big ego, and impatient

### Summary:

Birth Order is not something you can put your kids or even yourself in a box. Many different variables can determine their behavior. It's important for parents to not just accept the order of the birth of their child but to temper their understanding with a rational thought process. Is my child the only boy out of 4 children? How many years apart are my children? Factors such as these can determine whether your child acts more like a 1<sup>st</sup> child or middle child even if they are not in that birth order. The purpose of understanding birth order is to put this wisdom with the four main temperaments. You'll have a better understanding of why your 1<sup>st</sup> born child who is Choleric/Melancholy fights all the time with your Phlegmatic/Sanguine. It will help you understand how your "baby" of the family who is Sanguine/Choleric uses their people skills to manipulate the party they want to go to as well as their response when you say "not tonight".

When you had that first child you probably never realized how many things you'd have to learn about that child's makeup and temperament. When little Johnny got a little sister you just added to the degree of difficulty. Then along came another child and perhaps one more and all of a sudden you have a house full of potential misfits that act in ways you can't control. Then add your personality temperament and whether you were a firstborn or last to the equation and it's no wonder mom's and dads have some serious issues with the teens.

The purpose of understanding what's under the hood and the year model "car(s)" you have is to get you prepared to properly maintain and drive each different vehicle. My goal in this section was to get you prepared to properly solve those funny noises coming out of the engine. You first have to understand how that engine was created and then you can start treating the symptoms. Our journey has only begun but soon we'll be humming down the road taking our "joy" ride.