

# EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH

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## **A Review of the Caffeine Series**

By Rev. Danielle Neff  
Associate pastor, Mt Zion, York

Some of the hallmarks that make a curriculum effective when working with adolescents are playfulness, connection to the current culture and room for questions and discussion. These are all qualities found in the **Caffeine** series, by Steven Case and published by Pilgrim Press.

**What is It?** The Caffeine Series is made up of twelve books each containing 18 lessons, the idea being that each of the lessons or discussions, are ones that we might have over a cup of coffee. Titles of the books include: “Caffeine and Christ”, “Caffeine and Courage”, “Caffeine and Commitment.” The lessons cover a variety of subjects with the content area of courage or Christ or commitment, etc. Each session begins with either a brainstorming activity or an interactive game, followed by a time personal writing or drawing. The lesson then reflects on scripture passages and provides questions for discussion and further reflection.

**Who's it For?** The Caffeine Series is intended for a high school audience, though any of the lessons could be adapted to a middle school or even an adult class. This is a “ready to go” curriculum, with very little outside preparation necessary, but as with many curriculums, it would be enhanced by additional ideas and preparation by the session leaders.

**What Setting?** Caffeine could be used in a classroom or individual setting, on Sunday morning or during youth group.

**Any Drawbacks?** Some of the earlier Caffeine books (Caffeine and Christ, Commitment, Character, and Confusion) the references to pop-culture are somewhat dated (references to the Simpsons, some superheroes from the late 80s, etc.) but these are easily overcome by simply replacing the current cultural equivalent. Though the series is “ready to go” lesson wise, as always, it is helpful to have an engaging leader who is willing to do more than what is on the page and is good at drawing out the opinions and participation of others.

**Biggest Strengths** Caffeine's biggest strengths are in its succinct but detailed way of presenting material. The series has a knack for making connections through methods that are not rote or predictable. The topics are relevant and timely and reflect on the liturgical seasons and the seasons of adolescence (dating, decision-making, etc.) as well as the deep questions of faith that we all struggle with (what is my purpose?; what is God's role in my life?). Finally, though a cosmetic detail, it is appealing that each book is compact (4"x7 ½"), so it easily fits into a pocket.