

Foreword: Development, content and usage of this book

Bibliolog is an approach to discovering and interpreting a biblical text that involves a group of people, e.g. a congregation or a school class. Bibliolog was developed approximately 30 years ago by the North American scholar Peter Pitzele. Since the late 1990s it has been established in Germany and later in many other European and some African countries as well. This approach obviously fascinates people throughout different cultures – one could say perhaps that Bibliolog shows how different people can all be fascinated by biblical texts. Bibliolog employs the Jewish tradition of Midrash. By creatively filling the ‘gaps’ of the biblical texts (*white fire*) Bibliolog seeks to get closer to these written texts (*black fire*). Bibliolog can be performed with any group that is dealing with the Bible, whether it is in a service as a “sermon together with the congregation” or at school, or in women’s groups, senior groups, children’s groups or with people who have had little or no contact with the Bible.

This volume introduces the theoretical and practical essentials of Bibliolog, which can be performed in a rather short period of time with a group of any size. The book’s contents correspond to what is taught in basic Bibliolog courses. It often refers to “Scripture Windows”, written by Peter Pitzele.¹ In this book Pitzele introduces his concept of Bibliolog – which, in North America, is known as Bibliodrama – and presents the reader with helpful practical examples. In Europe, however, Pitzele’s approach could not be adopted without some minor changes. In Germany, for example, an approach related to Bibliolog, called Bibliodrama, had already been established. This had to be taken into account while trying to adapt Pitzele’s approach. Pitzele, who profits from his many years of experience, acts on intuition and often merges shorter and longer forms of Bibliolog spontaneously, while in Europe it has proven successful to start with the basic form and work on the more advanced forms later (which will be described in a second volume). This clear structure makes it easier to teach people in different contexts and cultures how to conduct Bibliolog – by now there are several thousand people who have been trained in Bibliolog.

This book may be used as accompanying literature while participating in a basic course for Bibliolog or as a reference later on. And for readers who are

¹ Cf. Pitzele, Peter A. 1998. *Scripture Windows. Toward a Practice of Bibliodrama*, Los Angeles: Alef Design Group.

not yet acquainted with Bibliolog at all, this volume provides them with all the essential information and hence might help them decide whether or not they would like to learn this particular approach. Reading the book, however, can by no means substitute for actually participating in a basic course. Especially people who already have a lot of experience working with the Bible might think that they could learn Bibliolog by simply reading this book. This cannot be recommended because Bibliolog is a very complex approach in which the details play an important role. Experience has shown that the attempt to conduct Bibliolog without having learned it properly is not very successful and might lead to confusion on the part of the participants. At worst people might have negative experiences with Bibliolog or even with biblical texts. Usually, the basics for performing Bibliolog can be learned in a one-week course (which can be divided into two parts). Bibliolog is a very versatile approach and provides a point of access to the Bible in many different environments. Therefore, learning Bibliolog requires relatively little effort, compared to the rich outcomes. Information regarding Bibliolog courses all over the world is available at: www.bibliolog.de or www.bibliolog.net.

At this point, I would like to add a few words regarding myself: I first encountered Bibliolog in 1999 in several workshops by Peter and Susan Pitzele and have been in touch with them ever since. Authorized by both of them, I have been giving seminars on Bibliolog since 2004. Furthermore, I have developed the advanced training concept for Bibliolog, on which this book is based. After all these years I still have a lot of fun performing and teaching Bibliolog. To see people get enthusiastic about Bibliolog and thus find a point of access to the Bible is fascinating and makes me very happy. Meanwhile, approximately 60 other people from different countries have become coaches in Bibliolog as well. In 2006 we founded the International Bibliolog-Network and as its spokesperson I am responsible for the internal and external communication. Together with all the other coaches it is my concern to spread Bibliolog and to give as many people as possible the chance to get to know this access to biblical texts.

In order to show that Bibliolog can be performed in many different fields and in different styles, I have asked several colleagues to present some of their experiences with this approach in the last chapter of the book.

Many people have been involved in the process of writing and publishing this book, either directly or indirectly. First and foremost I would like to thank all participants of my Bibliolog courses. With your curious, constructive and also critical questions and ideas you have contributed not only to the practical implementation of Bibliolog but also to its hermeneutical and theological foundation. My thanks also go to the coaches of Bibliolog with whom I am connected via the International Bibliolog-Network and who have taught

courses on Bibliolog together with me. They have played an important part in further developing Bibliolog in theory and in practice – and they continue to do so. Furthermore I would like to thank all the people who have agreed to share their experiences with Bibliolog in a particular field. I am thankful for Iris Weiss, Jens Uhlendorf and Maria Elisabeth Aigner's valuable advice regarding the German edition. I would also like to thank Saskia Eisenhardt for her translation, which profited both from her language expertise and her experience with Bibliolog. I owe special thanks to Peter and Susan Pitzele – for their wonderful friendship, for their generosity in sharing Bibliolog with all curious and open-minded people as well as for the gift of Bibliolog which they have given to people across the world. It is a great pleasure for me that Peter and Susan can now read this book in their language. Both have been very supportive of this project and Susan even agreed to proof-read the translation. Thank you so much!

May this English edition help more people in different countries to get to know Bibliolog. Hopefully, they will be inspired by this approach and experience that biblical texts are still alive and relevant for their lives.

Kiel, December 2014

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