



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WARFARE PRAYERS AMONG AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AFRICAN SOCIETY

Aiyedogbon Josiah Sunday¹ and James Onehi²

¹Department of Christian Religious Studies, Federal College of Education,
Okene, Kogi State.

Email: aiyedogbon483@gmail.com; Tel.: 08104164648, 08039722280

²Department of Christian Religious Studies, Federal College of Education,
Okene, Kogi State.

Email: adahonehi2@gmail.com; Tel.: 08068671227, 08053671638

Cite this article:

Aiyedogbon, J. S., James, O. (2025), The Significance of Warfare Prayers Among African Independent Churches in South-West Nigeria and its Relevance to African Society. African Journal of Culture, History, Religion and Traditions 8(2), 41-45. DOI: 10.52589/AJCHRT-HPBYTVTK

Manuscript History

Received: 2 Oct 2025

Accepted: 5 Nov 2025

Published: 3 Dec 2025

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0), which permits anyone to share, use, reproduce and redistribute in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the significance of warfare prayers among African Independent Churches in South-West Nigeria and its relevance to African society. Independent Churches are Churches that are independently started in Africa by Africans rather than chiefly by missionaries from another continent. The African Independent Churches usually engage in warfare prayers. This warfare prayer is one of their distinguishing features. Warfare prayer is a common ritual practiced among members of African Independent Churches in South-West Nigeria. It entails visualization of a supposed enemy or battle and the utilization of warfare prayers, songs and Bible verses to supposedly neutralize opposing forces. Warfare prayers as employed by African Independent Churches had gone a long way to contribute to the growth and expansion of these churches in Nigeria. The paper employs the use of library sources, archival materials and internet in gathering data for it. Findings reveal that warfare prayers in African Independent Churches have a strong connection with the foundation and beliefs of traditional African society that gives spiritual undertone to every situation confronting Africans. Therefore, it is recommended that Christians can adopt this type of warfare prayers as a means of finding solutions to problems confronting them spiritually.*

KEYWORDS: Significance, Warfare Prayers, African Independent Churches, Relevance, Society, Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

Warfare prayer has to do with spiritual warfare. In spiritual warfare, believers exercise their authority in Christ over supernatural evil which is believed to impede human progress and flourishing (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2020). African Independent Churches usually engage in warfare prayers which view the world in terms of evil machinations of enemies whom every individual must battle spiritually. It is associated with symbolic demonstrations of offensive and defensive mechanisms against the “enemy” through prayers (Oyelade & Omobowale, 2019).

There is no doubt that spiritual warfare is real. Christians have an enemy in Satan and his demons (Ephesians 6:12). Prayer is commanded in the context of putting on the armour of God (Ephesians 6:18). Promoters of warfare prayer often recommend praying prayers written by others and praying them repeatedly. Asamoah-Gyado (2020) asserts that the theology of spiritual interventionism is anchored in the general Pentecostal belief that Christians have been given the power to engage in spiritual warfare which is accomplished through ‘warfare prayers.’ The expression, ‘spiritual warfare’ is derived from Paul’s admonishment to the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:10-12—the expression, ‘our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood’ but against ‘rulers,’ ‘authorities’ and ‘cosmic powers’ or ‘principalities and powers’ by dealing with them through prayer and fasting. Spiritual warfare is influenced by the ministries of Jesus, the apostles and the writings of Paul. After the preaching of the Word, Jesus healed diseases and cast out demons (Matthew 4:23-25). Another practical example is rooted in the evangelistic work of Philip in Samaria, which resulted in casting out demons and healing those who were sick and oppressed of the devil (Acts 8:4-8).

Meaning of Warfare Prayers

Warfare prayer is a prayer technique popular within Charismatic Christian denominations. It focuses on using prayer as a weapon to battle against the spiritual forces of evil, especially in regard to one’s daily life, habits, and struggles. Almost always, warfare prayer is just what it sounds like: prayers prayed for the purpose of waging war against an unseen, spiritual enemy who is bent on making us unhappy by thwarting our dreams and desires.

Arnold (1997) asserts that spiritual warfare, which is warfare prayer, is the Christian concept of fighting against the work of preternatural evil forces. It is based on the biblical belief in evil spirits, or demons, that are said to interfere in human affairs in various ways. Warfare prayer commonly encourages a “take control attitude,” where prayer warriors are told to be bold, decisive, and faithful in prayer. There is nothing wrong with praying boldly and faithfully, as long as we remember who is in charge as it is not us.

Common “warfare prayer” includes many “I” statements, such as, “I declare,” “I decree,” “I bind,” “I overrule,” “I smash,” “I rebuke,” etc. The prayer is the acting agent and there is danger in praying “my will be done” rather than “Thy will be done.” Some warfare prayers recommend speaking to Satan in direct address. This is not biblical at all. Our prayers are to be directed to God alone. The Bible never tells us to rebuke Satan or to speak to him or his demons in any way. The rebuking of Satan is done by the Lord, not us. “Even the archangel Michael did not himself dare to condemn (Satan) for slander but said, ‘The Lord rebukes you’ (Jude 1:9).” The biblical instruction is to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7), not to demand things of Satan.



Probably the clearest danger in most “warfare prayer” is the focus on material things. Proponents of warfare prayers are often promoters of “name it, claim it” theology. Many warfare prayers include a “release” of wealth, a “binding” of sickness, or “decree” of restoration and blessing. Those with enough faith will decree a “sevenfold blessing upon themselves.” The New Testament is clear that God is not obligated to give us material wealth or to heal our sickness, no matter how much we demand or decree it and no matter how much we denounce the devil and his wiles. Warfare prayers mean praying according to Scripture, trusting in the power of God and submitting our will to His. Furthermore, warfare prayer entails the visualization of a supposed enemy or battles and the utilization of warfare prayer points, songs and Bible verses to supposedly neutralize opposing forces (Oyelade & Omobowale, 2023).

African Independent Churches and Warfare Prayers

African Independent Churches have strong affinity with warfare prayers. Ayegboyin (2016) asserts that in the second group of the African Independent Churches are the African Indigenous (Prophetic) Churches prevalently known as the ‘Aladura’ (Praying Churches) or Roho, Sunsum (Spirit) Churches. These Churches are also called African Initiated Churches or African Instituted Churches. They did not disengage from the Mission Churches for political reasons but what they claim to be the inability of the Mission Churches of the time to deal with certain sensitive religious, social and cultural issues from a spiritual dimension forced them to begin their movements.

Ayegboyin (2016) further explains that within the Nigerian Christian landscape, the Churches designated by scholars as belonging to the African Indigenous Churches are four in number. The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement (C & S), the Church of the Lord (Aladura), and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC). All of these four Churches started within the South-West Zone of Nigeria, among the Yoruba-speaking population and are otherwise known as “Aladura Churches.” The term “Aladura” means “owner of prayers.” The churches were so named because of the high premium which they placed on prayer and, more importantly, on warfare prayers. These churches believed strongly in the spiritual. They believed that it is the ‘spiritual’ that controls the physical; therefore, every problem confronting a man such as ill-luck, failures, barrenness, disappointment, poverty, sickness, attacks, etc have a ‘spiritual undertone.’ This makes them explain every problem of man in the light of spiritual undertone, which requires that spiritual warfare or warfare prayers be engaged to overcome such problems. This warfare prayer is a common feature of the African Independent Churches.

Basis for Warfare Prayers in African Independent Churches

Asamoah-Gyadu (2020) emphasizes that in the African context, generally, there is a strong belief in mystical causality, the worldview on which spiritual warfare or warfare prayer is founded. Africans believed in supernatural evil forces which include witchcraft and malevolent spirits which afflict their victims with disabilities and setbacks in life. In other words, the perception of the spirit world is dominant in Africa. This is in consonance with Amos (2023) who affirms that the perception of the reality of evil forces in Africa attracts all forms of spiritual rites in seeking more extraordinary spiritual powers for defensive and offensive warfare. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) draws an understanding from the Lord’s Prayer and avers



that evil predominantly includes witchcraft in Africa. The African worldview of witchcraft practices is a dominant part of the spiritual encounters in the African context.

The African context has a perception of the spirit world that shapes their worldview. Evil spirits cause painful afflictions to human beings. This experience is relevant to the African context and introduced unbiblical doctrines and practices within African Churches. Sorrowful experiences force humans, especially Africans, to view their painful afflictions from a religious belief and understanding (Amos, 2023). Arnold (1997) opines that the question of spiritual warfare reveals that ‘foundational to spiritual warfare is a belief in evil spirits and a desire to get the upper hand on them before they get it on us.’ He reiterated further that believers need to engage in spiritual battle to overcome evil spirits, just as Paul admonishes that our battle is against principalities, powers and evil forces (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Spiritual warfare is not new in Africa because of the belief in the reality of the spirit world. This belief in the spirit world has been carried over into the belief systems of the African Independent Churches. These churches share the African worldview on evil spirit and spirit world. This is the basis by which they approach the concept of warfare prayer or spiritual warfare which they strongly believe in and practice. This is in agreement with Oyelade and Omobowale (2023) who posit that warfare prayer is associated with the Yoruba belief system that attributes the so-called ‘spiritual, diabolical and their human agents with incapacitating capabilities, resulting in devastating effects on its victims.’ Therefore, Christians in African Independent Churches believe that such diabolical forces can only be vanquished by warfare prayers.

The Significance of Warfare Prayer in African Independent Churches and Its Relevance to African Society

Warfare prayer is very significant in African Independent Churches in the sense that these churches use it as a reliable weapon to confront the forces of evil responsible for several spiritual problems faced by Africans. Most problems faced by Africans have a spiritual undertone; it therefore requires spiritual power to confront and overcome spiritual evil forces which create several problems. The solution to this as used by the African Independent Churches is “warfare prayers.”

Warfare prayers coupled with visions, dreams and revelations, which the African Independent Churches strongly believe in, has helped greatly in exposing the roots of several problems encountered in African societies and these problems are usually overcome by using “warfare prayers.” This is very relevant to African society as it is peculiar with its own problems such as the activities of evil spirits and malevolent spirits well known and recognized. The application and use of “warfare prayer” has gone a long way to adapt the solution to the nature of African society. This is very evident with testimonies of victory over forces of evils and darkness prominent in African Independent Churches.



CONCLUSION

Warfare prayer entails the visualization of warfare prayer points, songs and Bible verses to supposedly neutralize opposing forces. Warfare prayer is employed by African Independent Churches as a weapon to overcome the forces of evil and malevolent spirits prevalent in African society. The African Independent Churches have to a large extent been very effective in the use of warfare prayer as a weapon and in helping Africans to overcome several of their challenges which have a spiritual undertone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Christians in various denominations can adopt warfare prayers used by the African Independent Churches as a means of finding solutions to their problems.
2. The use of 'Warfare Prayers' by African Independent Churches implies that they adapted a mechanism relevant to African society. Therefore, it is recommended that Christianity practiced in Africa should be contextualized as done by the African Independent Churches.
3. While commending the efforts of the AICs in helping Africans find solutions to their problems, however, the menace of 'False Prophets' arising in some of the AICs and other Churches need to be checked so that originality can be maintained.

REFERENCES

- Amos, Y.L. (2023). Spiritual warfare in Africa: Towards understanding the classical model in light of witchcraft practices and the Christian response. Retrieved from <http://www.scielo.org.za> >
- Arnold, C.E (1997). 3 Crucial questions about spiritual warfare. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group
- Asamoah, J.K. (2015). Witchcraft accusations and Christianity in Africa. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. 39 (1), 23-27
- Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K. (2020). Spiritual warfare in the African Context. Perspectives on a Global Phenomenon. Lausanne Global Analysis. 9 (1), Retrieved from <http://Lausanne.org/content/Iga/2020-01/spiritual;-warfare-african-context>
- Ayegboyin, D. (2016). Spirituality in the African Independent Churches. Retrieved from <https://african-theology.wordpress.com>
- Owojaiye, M. (2019). The Problem of false Prophets in Africa. Issue of Lausanne Global Analysis. Retrieved from <https://Lausanne.org/content/Iga/2029-11/problem-false-prophets-africa>
- Oyelade, O.K & Omobowale, A.O. (2023). Pentecostal conceptions of warfare prayer among the Yoruba in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. 53 (1), 3-20
- Oyelade, O.K & Omobowale, O. (2019). 'Warfare' Pentecostalism, poverty and welfare provisioning in South-Western Nigeria. *International Journal of Critical Diversity Studies*. 2 (2), 37-54. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/intecritdivstud.2.2.0037>