

## Own Your Stories

By **Patrick Mathieu**, author of the highly acclaimed book, *What's Your Expiry Date?*

There's what happened. And then there's the story ABOUT what happened.

If there were four witnesses of an event, there could easily be four different stories about what actually happened. It's called the [Rashomon Effect](#).

But in today's message I'm not concerned with the "truth" of what happened - I'm focusing more on the impact of the stories. I've heard it said that we don't have a problem with **what happened**... we have a problem with **the story about what happened**. Marcus Aurelius put it this way: "External things are not the problem. It's your assessment of them. Which you can erase right now."

Let me illustrate.

### **What happened:**

Someone cuts me off in traffic.

### **Story #1 about what happened:**

"Jeez! That person sure isn't paying attention - they must be in a big hurry. Maybe they're racing to see a sick loved one. Or maybe they got a call from the fire department that their house is on fire! Boy, I hope they get where they're going safely and that everything works out for them!"

### **Story #2 about what happened:**

"That jerk nearly killed me!!! Why I oughta...\*&^#%~ that )#&^%@ son-of-a &\*#@ dirty, rotten \*@!~\*#\$ ...." and so on.

Those are only two of the possible stories that I might tell myself about being cut off in traffic. If you've ever driven with me, you'll know that my reactions are always 100% in line with Story #1. (Shhhh... just go with me on this!)

In actual fact, and in both stories, there was no physical damage and no real harm done. It was just a close call. But the damage comes from which story I choose to tell myself about what happened.

The point isn't that one is a "good" reaction and one is a "bad" reaction. This isn't about being a saint behind the wheel. My point is to recognize that there's a split-second between what happens and the story we tell about what happens, and that split second is where you get to choose to OWN YOUR LIFE.

You see, I believe that owning your life begins with recognizing that you have the choice to decide what sort of story you're going to tell about any given situation.

When I recognize that I get to choose what story I'm going to tell, I can choose a story that serves me.

That's how I own my life and live like I matter - one story at a time!